

THE HEART
OF JESUS.

BY

P. N. WAGGETT, M.A.

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THE HEART OF JESUS

BEING ADDRESSES UPON

THE PRESENT REALITY OF THE PASSION

GIVEN IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

AT THE MIDDAY SERVICES IN HOLY WEEK, AND AT THE
THREE HOURS' DEVOTION OF GOOD FRIDAY, 1901.

BY

P. N. WAGGETT, M.A.

SOCIETY OF ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST

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To

MY DEAR AND MOST LOVING

MOTHER,

BY WHOSE SIDE I FIRST TOOK PART

IN THE DEVOTION OF THE THREE HOURS,

AND FROM WHOSE LIPS I LEARNED

THE NAME WHICH IS ABOVE EVERY NAME,

THE HOLY, SAVING, AND EVER-BLESSED NAME OF

JESUS.

PREFACE

I TAKE this occasion to offer my thanks to the Very Reverend the Dean and the Reverend Chapter of St. Paul's, by whom I was permitted to share the Holy Week Devotions of the Cathedral; to the venerable Society which invited and authorized the present publication; and to my kind friend, Mr. G. E. Hall, who, when he was quite unknown to me, made a full shorthand report of the addresses, and with a ready generosity which I have since proved in many instances, placed his careful transcript freely at my disposal.

I have done what other duties permit me to do towards making the sentences clear. The general aspect of the addresses must remain quite different from that of a written composition.

If there is anything in these pages which appears doubtful, I do not—at least at this time, or in this form—contend for it. Let whatever appears reasonable and plain be taken for what it may be worth.

In what I have said of the Ransom paid by our Divine Saviour (pp. 10, 28, etc.), I hope I have kept within the words of Holy Scripture. In respect of the allied and combined, but not necessarily identical truths of Redemption, Purchase, and Ransom, we need a study of Scriptures, by review, co-ordination, and especially analysis, even more searching than the many which have been published. The *deliverance of mankind* which our Lord effected by His Death was a work of *Power*, and the dyeing of His garments the sign of victorious conflict. That rescue was typified by the overthrow of Egypt and the passage of the Red Sea. There was no price paid to Satan; he was spoiled as Pharaoh was spoiled; and the Holy Life was paid down as the soldier's life is paid down in the work of rescue—life for life, the hero's life for the life of the oppressed. "The Son of

Man came to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. xx. 28); "A ransom for all" (1 Tim. ii. 5).

But in the Passion there was a mystery of true Purchase, and the Precious Blood was and is a price. The Purchase was the purchase of the *Church*, which our Lord bought for Himself, not from God but unto God (Rev. v. 9); and the treasure was paid to alienated souls that they might be no longer "their own" but "bought with a price" (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20), "not with silver and gold," as a bride was bought by an earthly husband, "but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. i. 18, 19). The price was paid *for possession*. Christ is our Master—*δεσπότης*—Whom we may not disown, our "Master that bought" us (2 Pet. ii. 1) to be His slaves (1 Cor. vii. 23). He is the Lord Who has given Himself for the Church, "that He might present it to Himself" (Eph. v. 25, 27), "the Church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood" (Acts xx. 28). He is the Bridegroom—the title is reserved in

the ancient Scriptures to God—Who claims “the Bride the Lamb’s wife” (Rev. xxi. 9), because He has “purchased unto God with His blood men of every tribe and tongue and people and nation” (Rev. v. 9).

The substance of the Introductory Address of Good Friday is contained in what was said on Monday and Tuesday. From my point of view it was necessary to repeat it in presence of a congregation practically new to me.

P. N. W.

Ditchingham,

St. Etheldreda's Day, 1901.

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I

MONDAY IN HOLY WEEK

“For there is one God, one Mediator also between God and men, Himself man, Christ Jesus, Who gave Himself a ransom for all; the testimony to be borne in its own times; whereunto I was appointed a preacher and an Apostle.”—1 TIM. ii. 5-7.

TO-DAY I propose simply to consider something of the purpose of the Holy Week, and the method of keeping it. The text, in spite of certain difficulties which you will suppose have not been left unconsidered, may be taken to refer to two realities—the facts of our Lord’s Passion, and the testimony which is borne to those facts in their own season. From time to time, in proper seasons, by Apostles appointed, and in the Church which fulfils as a whole the apostolic function, there is borne the due testimony, and the effective working testimony, to the saving facts of our Lord’s redeeming death. There are the two points: first, the Lord’s redeeming death. “He gave Himself, being a Mediator between God and man, Himself man—He gave Himself to be

a ransom," ἀντίλυτρον, a ransom equivalent,¹ and equivalent in nature, equivalent to all mankind. He gives life for life, His life for all those lives. And in the second place, this act of His giving is testified to in a saving manner; so that people are lifted out of sin and death into life and righteousness by the fulfilment, age after age, of the apostolic duty of bearing testimony to the death of Jesus. This is the purpose which Holy Week in part fulfils. Holy Week belongs to that great work of witness. It is a solemn and organized and church-wide bearing of that testimony of the death of Christ which is able, when received, to save men's souls. Therefore it is good for us to consider how best, or rather in what fashion among many equally good, we may make this week a real one to ourselves.

There must be in the first place always the great work of memory—the work of reading and hearing and knowing the sacred record of the Lord's death. And so, behind every other kind of exercise in Holy Week—more fundamental than all our prayers and offices, lies the reading of the Scripture which is set down for us morning after morning in the Holy Liturgy. That is the base and fundamental necessity of a good Holy Week—to give ourselves to the hearing, or according to our

¹ See Preface, p. vii.

opportunity to the reading, of the inspired record of the way in which Christ died. And that, although it is so very simple and obvious a duty to be fulfilled according to our opportunities, is nevertheless one which at this moment needs to be emphasized. For we hear everywhere—and it is a wholesome cry—of the superiority of the inward to the outward. It is indeed a stirring hope of our moment, this return to the inward sphere of reality which is in man's consciousness. But because of that penury of our nature which always leads us to think that to gain one good thing we must lose some other good thing—a mood of mind which comes from the natural narrowness of our circumstances in this world—because of this, there is abroad an opinion that we shall more firmly grasp and know and enjoy the inward presence and power of Jesus Christ if we disparage, and turn our backs upon, the historical records of the ancient saving facts. Amiel is quoted afresh: "The great need of the age is a translation of Christianity out of the sphere of history into the sphere of psychology,"—which means that we are to persuade ourselves and each other to look for and to cultivate Christian moods in the heart, and to be indifferent to the reality of the great facts in the world long ago, and in Heaven and earth now. It becomes us Chris-

tians, therefore, to say that we shall find the security of this inward knowledge and saving power of Christ nowhere else, unless we find it also in an "historical" belief that He really took our flesh upon Him; and, being Himself Man, actually in the sphere of common facts, in history, worked out the salvation which to-day the believer is to find and cherish and live upon in his secret heart. The first part, then, of the work of Holy Week is the memory, the acceptance, the renewal of our knowledge, of these sacred, saving facts as they are recorded for us in the Gospels.

Then in the second place—and this also is, of course, very familiar to all Christians—there is the great work of the affections. And it is precisely in contrast to this work of the affections that I would state the method which I beg you especially to consider. Not that we should in any way, or need in any way, disparage that work of sensitive feelings and warm imagination and almost dramatic representation of the death of Christ. All that, in the inspired body of the Church, and done according to the will of the Holy Spirit energizing in the Church, is a real and blessed help towards bringing the soul and mind into contact with the Redeemer Who loves us. But every one who has spent many Holy Weeks—who has gone on year after year in something

like faithful devotion during this week, and year after year has knelt on Good Friday, and striven to raise up his mind and heart by imagination in sympathy with the Saviour—knows something of the danger and the difficulty about which I would speak for one moment; the danger, that is to say, of feeling that our strong and warm sensations and ideas, our love and our sorrow, can only be maintained at their height by resolutely forgetting matters of fact. This method of devotion, good as it is, lies under the threat of so simple and so inevitable a danger as the revealing by our memories of what goes on outside the door. “Christ is before us,” you say with your historical present. You speak of Him as going from place to place, as doing the great acts this week. And all the while—even on Good Friday—the common man, rich or poor, the wise men and the simple, the busy people and the thoughtful, are haunted by this answer, “Yes, but it is not so. After all, to-day is as yesterday. As for our God, He is to-day in Heaven just as yesterday, just as after next Sunday He will be.” There is the perpetual threatening of the incoming of criticism into this method of devotion which relies upon a warm imagination and a loving spirit of sensitive affection. That danger is a real danger. And it is a sad pity that we should attempt

to get rid of it by crushing down and putting out of sight the obvious fact that this Monday in the first week of April is for God, precisely like last Monday, precisely like the Monday which we usually call, after the day of Resurrection, Easter Monday. Our God is to-day in Heaven even as before, and those old facts, though we speak of them as if they were repeated before our eyes, are not, indeed, repeated any more ; for He has once died, and having died unto sin once, He is in Heaven, alive for evermore in the substance of His sacred human nature—alive for evermore to the glory of God the Father !

We do well, then, to consider a third method, this third real link between us and our Divine Saviour, which will stand all the stress of common sense, of ordinary experience ; which will not faint when sensitive affection begins to flag ; which will not sink when the imagination grows cool, but stands firm in the reality of present facts. What are the present facts which this week, and on Good Friday especially, we can enter into ? They are briefly the present fact of the sin and need of man and the present fact of the Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ. This last is a fact not outside our apprehension, as is the fact of God's most holy Being, which we adore, but cannot come near to so as to understand it ; in the Lord's

Heart—God and man—in His human affection, is a fact which in one sense is in the same order as our own hearts, as our own experience day by day; which together with its human accessibility has obtained a divine permanence, has been filled—through the power of the Word, through the will of the Father, by the operation of the Holy Ghost—has been filled with the perpetual abiding continuance and fulness of life which belong to the Heavenly order and to the throne of God. So then before us to-day and to-morrow, and all this week, there lies the Heart of Jesus Christ. And, you will say, this week is the same as other weeks. And I reply, the Holy Week is given us in order that by means of the pointers, if I may so speak, which are given to us in the memory of the sacred facts, and by means of those other directors which are in our own wants, our own hearts, we may penetrate all the mist of ages, all the cloud of sins, and come up to where Jesus Christ waits for us, “the same yesterday and to-day and for ever”; and yet in such wise the same that there is in Him somewhat, a reality of fact, which rightly and truly and actually corresponds with, and is the perpetual fountain of, those actions and those sufferings which He accomplished in that week of which Holy Week is the memory. There, in Christ, in the fulness

of His heart, are those qualities, those movements of the soul, those realities of spiritual being, which were the fountain-head of His suffering, of His willingness to die for us. For to every single detail of the sorrow and the pain there answers an abiding reality in the Heart of Jesus Christ to-day. And starting from our Church-memory of what He did, by pondering over the record, we arrive at a communication very much higher than that of personal memory—much more real than that of excited feelings or of warmed imagination; we find a road in the Holy Spirit Himself, in the sphere of His operation; we enter a path which will lead us gradually, step by step, back to where Christ, up to where Christ waits for us, pouring out from His Heart the very movements, the real spiritual activities which were the cause of all the separate actions of His Passion and Death. Thus in succeeding days we may really find the true substance of each of those things which in Holy Week are put before us. We come to the true substance of His sacrifice, for it is now flowing out from His Heart. We come to the true substance of His Passion, for the reality of His Passion is still in His Heart. We are come to the true pity for sinners which nailed Him to the Cross, for that is still moving towards us. And so coming, as we look up and pray for the Holy

Ghost, as we seek to see Him with our hearts, and beg that the eyes of our understanding may be opened, we are brought into the very law and rule which governed the Passion itself. For the Passion itself, as we may perhaps find an opportunity to say, is a fact altogether of the heart. In its true reality it rests upon the laws of love. "Thou sayest," one of our new poets has sung, "Thou sayest this law ordains relief all other laws above—That earth cannot contain its grief, nor Heaven contain its love." That was the law which brought Christ down from Heaven; that was the strong impulse which led Him to the Cross; and we, entering into movements and realities of the same kind, shall find Him actually present to our hearts. Along the path of the history, along the path of the recorded actions, we shall find our way back, not to some fanciful representation of His Person, nor to some vision of His standing before us, but we shall come to the secret of His Heart, to the true reality, to the true Jesus Christ, to the real power of God's love which answers to the requirements of our real hearts.

"O healing face," cries the same poet—whom faith can welcome as a new ally, and who did not always, I think, stand quite clearly on our side in the conflict with sense and the world—

“O Healing Face, to all mankind most kind,
Teach me to find Thee, lest I wander blind !
For as the river seeks the sea, And as its rest the rain,
So seeks my face for Thee, So pleads my prayer the
 pain
That pleads through Thee :
‘ Behold and see,
Is there a sorrow that has no part in me ? ’ ” ¹

And to conclude, because it is founded upon His pity and our grief, because this method of coming to God lies in the law, and according to the operation, of His own real motives in loving us, therefore it is secure, and therefore also it is easy for us. It is hard for us to stir again the tinglings of imagination, but it is easy for us to find again, to sink again into our wretchedness, to know again our need or, not knowing it, to groan out the groan that cannot be uttered. There in the heart lies the hollowness which Jesus Christ can fill. We then in this week are called upon for no straining of the intelligence, that we should strive might and main to understand things too hard for us ; we are called upon for no magic of imagination that by some cultivated mood, or by some shrouded room, or by some unnatural silence, we should avail to imagine ourselves in the fleshly presence of Jesus Christ. But we have only to leave off our battling with ourselves, to cease to

¹ Laurence Housman, *Spikenard*.

silence that cry which can neither be stilled nor uttered, to let the heart tell those things it cannot tell, to let it ache out its ache, and in its aching it finds already Jesus Christ Who is the answer, and not only the answer but the clearly heard answer, to all those griefs. "This law ordains relief" for the strain and work of meditation as much as for the great evil of the world. "This law ordains relief" for the recluse with his tired eyes strained against the crucifix. "This law ordains relief all other law above, that earth cannot contain its grief." It will come if you let it, it will cry if you uncover it; you have but to lie before the all-seeing eye of God, and earth cannot contain that grief which is its claim; "earth cannot contain its grief, nor Heaven contain its love." And in the moment when your Holy Week fails, when the Gospel stirs you not, when the memories of Gethsemane cannot be reconstructed in the heated theatre of the brain, when you can no longer ring up as it were some curtain at your order to the sacred drama of the Lord's Passion which you have yourself set upon the stage of fancy; when you own yourself hopeless and alone; when you say I find nothing but the bare wall of my cold room, or the emptiness of my poor cell—then, when there is no person to see but yourself in your actual place, with your real

grief, with your actual anxiety, with your trouble about money, with your fretting over some fault; then when you are yourself and helpless, and know only your nakedness and your grief and your futility, or, knowing them not, let them lie open to the rain and sun of Jesus Christ's love, then will Christ be present, not because you have made so fair a shrine of memory that there needs a vision to complete the glory of its furniture, but because you are the sinner for whom He died, and because He longs still, as at first, to step from Heaven out of the brightness of the Father's heart into the nature which He took that He might redeem it—Himself man, Mediator between God and man, giving the ransom, fit—not only sufficient but fit, ἀντίλυτρον—for every soul ready to have the testimony borne to it by the spoken voice and by the power of the Spirit in its own times—such times as this Week will be if you are content to lie before the love of God in the helplessness of the grief which is your claim upon His revelation and His mercy.

II

TUESDAY IN HOLY WEEK

“Now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.”—HEBREWS ix. 26.

IN these short services for busy men we are obliged to touch in the briefest possible manner upon subjects which however familiar would well repay our deliberate and careful thought. And yet I will spend one or two of the moments which are open to us in reminding you of what we said yesterday. Just for this particular effort of our devotion, not in the least, of course, disparaging other ways in which you are keeping your Holy Week, but only for these midday hours of prayer, I venture to advise you to seek our Lord by faith according to that abiding reality of His Heart by which He energizes towards us and for us in the Passion—to lift up the spirit to Him by a silent and quiet accepting of the help of the Holy Ghost rather than by a strain of memory, or by the most urgent

occupation of the imagination and the affections. We are before God now, and He is the same as on that day, and we are the same as those for whom first He died—and so by means of our need and of our nature, by the power of the Holy Ghost, we are able so to make use of the record of the saving actions of the Lord that, holding them as if a golden clue, we come back to His Heart from which those actions proceeded, the Heart which still bends over us, and is willing to communicate to us that richness and that strength by which He died. There is the great reality of the Saviour's Heart, there is the reality of our need. And in our need we have a faculty most fit, most able to arrive at Him, to receive Him. And this faculty which is ours by nature, the faculty of our deep need and poverty, is lifted up by the Holy Ghost into the energy of the redeemed and regenerate life, so that we have to-day, this week, a feature, a part, of that union with Christ in heaven which is the life of the Christian. We are come to the real Mount Sion, to the real Jesus, Mediator of the new covenant. And I will venture once again to remind you that this fact—the mental fact, as you call it—the fact of consciousness, the fact of will, the fact of moral need, the fact of the Saviour's love—this is the deep reality. We are not to

think that by way of a poor substitute for seeing the sacred wounds in His pierced Side and Hands and Feet we have the knowledge of His Heart—as if this were something offered to grudging acceptance since we cannot again see His pain and grief. No; spirit is the root of fact. Indeed, that man's mind is altogether off the track who thinks that outward things are the model of reality by which all other existence is to be judged. For such a man as this it does not greatly matter whether, by the observation of the world, he arrives at a positive or a negative conclusion; for, in fact, his whole mind is rootedly unreligious, since he supposes that the things which are seen are the things which govern; whereas we know that the things which are unseen are eternal—the things of the mind, of the heart, of the will, of the purpose. By this will of the Saviour we are sanctified, brought into the current of His sacrifice, made holy; thus, and not otherwise; by the virtue of His Blood.

So we are not departing from the strictest and most devout care for the acts of Holy Week if we resolve to-day in our prayer to reach after Him, to come to Him, to receive Him, Who is willing not only to show to us, but to bestow upon us that powerful energy of triumphant love which was then, and is

now the true substantial reality of His sacrifice and death.

And in this thought is a strong consolation for any who find, as many of us do find, that the story of the Lord's Passion does not touch them—does not come home. We are like thirsty men from whose dry throats the coolness of the water seems perpetually to escape. We drink—but there is an elusive secret of thirst which is not caught and reached by the tempting draught. Even so, we hear these words and we know our thirst, but somehow the Saviour's death in its bitterness cannot sting the palate of our minds. The story does not reach us—does not pierce us; and so it is also in the things we most deeply care about to-day—and why? It is, my brothers, because we have drunk the sorrow before, because we have known the real bitterness too early. To-day there come to us in our little home at Oxford personal details of the plague troubles in Cape Town—of the people so suddenly struck down that in spite of organization they lie untended in their pain; of a man staggering away from the doors of the hospital where he could not be admitted, and hiding himself in the woods. As it were yesterday, the day before his letter, Father Congreve was hunting a dying plague patient who staggered before him through

the copse which covers the rough ground of our suburbs, and found him and watched by him there until the health-officer could be dispatched to relieve his guard. There is for the time, among men and women we know so well, this sense of disorganization, of panic and disaster. The terrifying experience of plague—legendary for us in England—is upon them at this moment; and we hear it unmoved. The children we know lie under its shadow, the homes we ought to have visited are visited by the plague-searchers. Over one of our own mission-houses floats the yellow flag. Among my few Christmas cards is one from a lad who sickened lately of the strange disease, and in thirty-six hours was dead. And yet the terror does not sting us, it does not pierce—and why? Because for years it has been known—the real bitterness; the neglect of the poor, the slight regard of human life, the cruel folly of sanitary neglect. It has been known for years—"The first epidemic that visits us (we used to hear) will sweep off these people like flies." Perhaps they are dying like flies now, and we do not feel it. Do we not care? We care, yes, but it does not sting us—it does not make the heart beat faster, it does not make the tears spring—why? Because all the tears are shed. We have done all that, we knew that before—we

knew the real thing. The trouble is not that men should die concomitantly instead of in series—what does it matter whether they die by the score this week or die one by one through the weeks of the year—they have all to die once, and they none have to die twice. What is the real tragedy? The real tragedy is the neglect, the hardness, the selfishness, the foolishness, the want of providence, the want of gratitude for God's great gifts. That is what counts; and we have drunk that cup and know it. And so when the news comes to us of divers forms of death, it comes to a dead heart which has already been beaten upon till it can sound no more. We are immune to that poison because we have drunk of it.

So also when the war came with all its stories of bloodshed, it did not quicken very much the pulses of our grief, because we had known it before. The real substance of it, the true inwardness of it, the ancient hatred, the long jealousy, the cruel misunderstandings, the devilish work of the great enemy himself, setting brother against brother,—all that had been done and fixed before ever they went—strong and wise men—to the council in Bloemfontein. That was done and fixed and known and settled; the blood was shed, whether the veins were opened or not. And so it is the

real thing, this spiritual and moral fact, the fact of consciousness in us and in God; this is the substantial blessing; this is the substantial curse. And the Lord's Cross and Passion found their reality first in His will, in His Heart, in His Mind, in His love, in His intention and purpose; found their bitterness in the wicked grudge of those who stood about Him, not first in groans and tears and beaded brow. And that reality still stands to-day—the love of God resisted, not accepted; the heart of man hungry and not fed; the poor, fast bound under the heel of the oppressor and not cared for, though God regardeth unrighteousness and wrong from Heaven, and gives His Son to be the poor man for us, to trample under-foot at our peril.

Those are the realities. So we are not substituting something less warm than imagination, something less touching than a picture, something less critically, severely true than the record. On the contrary, we fasten upon the solid reality behind them all, when we offer our naked hearts to God and pray Him to stamp upon them the impression of the Saviour's love, according to the power, according to the system, by means of the guiding points of the actions of which we read.

Now how shall we pursue the study of this

reality? Speaking slowly, as we must in this vast place, we have now only reached the beginning. We take first the most familiar truth. Of our Saviour's death, that which is most easily said is that it was a sacrifice of pain. That is the notorious truth concerning Him—that He was a sufferer and that He was a sacrifice. To-morrow we will consider Him as the sufferer—the sinless sufferer—and so far as time and power permit, ask what that means. To-day let us consider Him as our only sacrifice. He gave Himself to be an offering for sin. He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. The blood of bulls and goats was typical of His; He came to fulfil the type—"In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast no pleasure. Then said I"—it is the Son of God Who speaks—"lo! I come to do Thy will, O God." He came to offer an acceptable sacrifice, and "this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right Hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool."

We are then to consider His sacrifice—His glorious and saving sacrifice—the redemption which comes by the paying down, as it seems to us, of the Blood.¹ Now this to human hearts—and it is fortunate, for there are few things more

¹ See Preface, p. vii.

deadening than unanimity—this preaching of the Cross as a blood paid down, as a sufficient and a fit sacrifice and ransom for us, shocks to some extent not only our sense of justice, but that which, believe me, is much nearer to us, our sense of self-regard and human dignity. If you inquire among those who must know the world best whether there is any religious feeling or movement going on amongst those who are not with us in the Church, what there is in the great world which matches to our religion, what kind of thought springs up in real power and motive over there, I believe you will hear this, that the only thing quite clear to our modern is that he must keep himself, that he must make the best of himself, that he must be as the phrase goes, “what he can be.” Just, as the thrush on the lawn pounces on his proper food, and is so victoriously himself in that, so the man has to be himself. And it is because of this—that he must live his life, that he must be what he is capable of being—because of this and not from any arbitrary dislike for being good, that we must get rid of our Sundays and our worship and our ten commandments; because they check this self-development of the man. That is the new religion, “Keep yourself; live your life: get out of yourself all that you can be. This will which is the real

identity, give it freedom, let it grow, let it come out; seize what you want. The checking of the desire to take what you want stunts and falsifies, and tends to nullify that which is. Never lose your identity. In not taking what you wish you fail to be what you are. You are a traitor not to this and that part of Mosaic morality—you are a traitor to the deepest interest of your own existence. For your existence is to will; to manage to acquire that for which you feel a desire; to get and to have." What a gospel for the poor! What a gospel for the *rich*!

Now we, feeling this to have some sort of sense in it, are obliged to explain the matter of sacrifice. We are called upon to say that sacrifice—the sacrifice of the Lord which is the type and only reality of all sacrifice—is not destruction, is not the passing away of the self, is not the crowding down of the feelings, is not the annulling of the will. Sacrifice does not consist—that is to say, not characteristically—in death, destruction, abolition, going out of being. In the ancient ritual it is not the knife which is characteristic of the accepted sacrifice. There are offerings in the Old Testament which have the knife, but which yet fail of being "most holy." But what marks the offering which is most holy, most acceptable, divine, absolutely God's, in ritual

and type and sign? Why, not the knife, but the fire. It is the golden flame which wraps the poor dead offering, takes it up into the life of Heaven, snatches it out of sight, out of the waste of life, takes it up into an eternal continuance—I mean in ritual, symbolically—into an abiding world. And it is the anti-type of all this which characterizes sacrifice. It is the Holy Ghost, the Heavenly Fire coming down from Heaven, enveloping that which might have been and now shall not be wasted because it is taken and accepted into that golden shroud of the Divine response. The Holy Ghost, the anti-typal Fire, comes down and accepts the perfect thing, not spoilt—just because it is not spoilt—and takes it up into the secure possession, and the almighty prevailing power of God, by the merits of the Lamb to the Throne of love. Even so He, having offered one sacrifice, was accepted, and henceforth sits at the right Hand of God, not as if thus to take back His sacrifice, not as a way of cancelling His death, but as the way to live out the life which He truly lived in the sacrifice, in the passion, in the death. He comes living to the Father, He offers in victorious might His soul to God, He bursts through all the bonds, all the snares which keep us back, and by the Holy Ghost He is strong to escape, to make His exodus at Jerusalem, to

pass away from our selfishness, to pass away with us. That is what characterizes sacrifice. It is the special destiny of the creature that is offered, not to be lost, but to be kept. What becomes of the rest of the herd? Do the rest of the herd live? The cattle upon a thousand hills are God's, and one is taken for His altar. Do the rest live? No, the rest die and may chance to rot upon the plain—as we saw them three years ago in Africa scattered dead or buried in their heaps. So the unoffered beasts of Israel died under the rinderpest in those old days. That which characterizes the sacrifice is that out of the herd of Israel all doomed to death at last, one was taken, preserved by the salt, accepted by the sanctifying fire, chosen out and made God's, and symbolically accepted, as it were, into the sky; taken up in the cloud of the fragrant smoke to the presence of God, preserved there, pleading there; symbolical of the Lord Who, offering Himself out of our perishing race, taking the nature which by itself finds itself crumbling to dust—seized it from us by a strong insistence, held it all, gripped it firm, pressed it through all the trials of life, brought it to the place of rescue, brought it to God, met the responsive fire of His acceptance, and was taken up according to the willingness of His sacrifice into the Heart of God—yes, even in His sacred

creaturely nature—so that, Man with us, holding us in Himself, one with us, having our substance—He is preserved by the virtue of the sacrifice in the eternal peace and power and life of the Father's Throne—at His right Hand. That is what is characteristic of sacrifice—not the knife, but the flame. It is the poor rejected sacrifice which lies there, so much meat, so much fruit; it is the sacrifice of the priests of Baal unconsumed; the sacrifice of Cain on his unvisited altar. But the accepted sacrifice is rapt by fire; and the sacrifice of the better Abel is translated by the anti-typal flame of the Holy Ghost. Tomorrow, if it please God, we will try to learn how it was that this victorious progress which is the essence of sacrifice—this ebullition of a life which God had Himself insinuated into the stream of our human nature—how this came to suffer, whence the pain came. But to-day let us only grip this, that the sacrifice we celebrate, the sacrifice we adore and thank God for, is a sacrifice of an overflowing life, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God—mounting up by the power of its own will, welcomed by the living response of the fire from heaven, of the Holy Ghost into which we also may enter, for it kindles continually in the humanity of Jesus, that all the redeemed may be hidden evermore in the golden fire of

the altar. As blessed Polycarp stood fragrant within the domed flame of his martyrdom, so the Church and we in the Church by reason of our union with Christ may have the kindling spread through us, and by that gorgeous veil of sacrifice be hid from earthly praise that we may be accepted up into the continuance and power of the divine kingdom.

One word more and only one. This sacrifice is not only the meaning, the inwardness of the moment of our Lord's passion and death. It is the meaning of the whole of His Life. Sacrifice began in His conception; as soon as He was Man He began to be offered to the Father. And even if we were to say that it is earlier than His human life we should but be using a bold word; for St. Paul tells us that above in the heavenly counsel there was already in the mind of the Word Who was to be Christ—the mind of Christ willing to empty Himself, to become of no reputation, stooping to receive us—already this power and will of sacrifice, and why? Because it is the characteristic of the life of the eternal Word. His life consists in this—the power of a sufficient and a victorious response to the Father's heart. He flows out from the Father according to the power of an unbegun birth—the eternal Sonship; and He flows back to the Father in the power of an unbegun self-giving—the eternal

Priesthood, perpetually respondent to the Father's love and invitation. And this, the eternal characteristic and nature of that stream of energy which is the life of the Word, as soon as that Life stepped into our humanity, when it took up the fragments of our dust, immediately swept them along with the same velocity and in the same direction, with the same victorious success, up to the Heart of God. A light chip of wood falls into the rushing stream. There is no moment during which it pauses before it picks up the momentum of the great torrent; but as soon as it touches the gliding surface of the river, already, at once, it has the full momentum; already it sweeps along to the same bourne, at the same pace, with the same certainty of arrival. And so when humanity, the light dust of creation, fell into the broad bosom of the stream of God's life in the Incarnation, when our nature as a whole was picked up by the moving torrent and the responsive glory of the Word, immediately it was seized upon by the same law, immediately it sought the same end, immediately it was impelled to the Father's Heart at the velocity of Godhead with the perfection of the Word's eternal and perfectly sufficient and acceptable love, towards the Father Who is before all things were, one Life with the Son and the Spirit in the mystery of

the Godhead. That is the sacrifice of the Lamb. It is the taking up of our nature—or rather it is the falling of our nature with its sorrow and complexity, as it stands, wholly without sin, yet with the sinless consequences of sin, into the broad river, upon the moving mirror of that stream of life which is the eternal Word, Who by reason of His unfaltering love immediately begins to sacrifice it, begins to offer it, holds it up to the Heart of the Father, bends it to the eternal Divine Will, bestows upon it that which is the greatest of all gifts, bestows upon it the glory of acceptance; gives it the anti-typal acceptation of Abel's offering and Elijah's; draws down upon it, by the title of His Sonship, by the merit of His virtue, the answering fire of the eternal Spirit. In Christ may we also, trusting to Him, kindled by Him, be taken up an acceptable living sacrifice to the Father, thus proving, finding, knowing in ourselves what is that will of God, wholly good, acceptable and perfect.

III

WEDNESDAY IN HOLY WEEK

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.”—
1. PETER iii. 18.

WE promised ourselves yesterday that we would seek to pursue the thought of our Lord's sacrifice as an operation of life, of joyful and successful giving of the self to God, and inquire how, if it is this, it comes to be stained with blood and accomplished through death. Such thoughts appear unpractical to a certain class of minds; we preach them because they are such as help our own souls. It is thus that, in our own experience, some of us are set more free from theft and envy; and therefore we think it practical to point out to sinners the way of the Lord—the story of Jesus Christ—rather than to rebuke them in set terms and the briefest sentences for their daily follies. It becomes very clear after some years spent in the darkest places

of the poor, that what helps a man to walk straight is the knowledge of what Jesus did, and not the echo from the clergyman's throat of the sins which he knows perfectly well before. Pardon me, then, if I cannot accept the suggestion that I ought to talk to you about your sins. I would rather speak to you about your Saviour, and invite you to consider after what inward and most lasting fashion He has saved you; what is the purpose of His Heart and Will; what is the standing reality of His divine and human love.

We saw, then, that sacrifice is an operation of life. It is a success, not a failure; the rising up of the life so as to be given back to God, and therefore saved in the continuance and glory and eternity which belong to God; life which has escaped from the creaturely corruption and found God Who is its Father. If this is so sacrifice answers to creation; it does not answer to judgment, to sin, to Sinai. It answers to creation; we owe it to God because He is our Father. Not because He is our offended Father, but because He is our Father who made us. Since He made us, and so made us that He bestowed upon us a real likeness to His own being, we have this for our success—to return to God; to be yielded and bestowed by an exercise of the will which He gave to us to use. We are

led to take this will, to exercise it; and by this will—empowered by Jesus Christ—we also are sanctified by being rendered back again to God our Father Who made us. And this follows, we said, from the fact that God made us in the Word, in Christ, in the Holy Son, the very form and fashion of Whose Being is a response to Almighty God, is a flowing back to the Father's Heart. Therefore we who are made in Christ, in proportion as we really acquire that community with Christ in will and thought which is promised to us by our creation in Him, in proportion as we enter into His Life, so we enter also into His sacrifice and are rendered up joyfully and willingly to God the Father.

But in order to clear this from difficulty, we have to consider how it is, then, that this joyful entrance of Jesus Christ in our flesh into the bosom of the Father, was effected by the Cross, was stained with mockery and torture, scourging, spitting, and rejection, by blood-shedding and by death. And the answer which we can offer must remain very far from being complete; nevertheless it may have its real and practical lesson for us, because it will teach us and guide us in the answering offering of our own being to God. We shall learn how to accept in our own Godward life—if it becomes truly Godward—we shall learn how

to accept the Cross ; how to welcome it ; how not to be killed by it ; even as our Lord was not killed by it. For though He was put to death in the body, He was quickened thereby in the spirit, and went in that power to preach to the spirits who long ago had been kept in chains in darkness in the prison place, since the unfaithfulness of the time of Noah.

Our answer then is something like this. Our answer is, the suffering, the Cross, the torture, the strain, the sweat, the blood-shedding, come from the circumstance that our Lord was in a world which hated sacrifice. It was averted from God. It was different in direction from that stream moving towards the Father's Heart which is the Being of the Incarnate Word. The world was like a rock in the middle of that stream, breaking the smoothness of its surface, casting it into foam and anger. The world was hard not because it was itself a sacrifice, but because it was opposed to sacrifice—averted from God's Heart, willing to keep itself to itself. And so the Lord when He put Himself in our conditions—in our nature—and did our work in us, found the rest of His race opposing the movement of His Heart towards the Father. It was because our Lord was ready to be offered, and the world in which He lived had this for its very note and habit—the desire to keep to

itself what seemed to be its own, the rejection by it of all sacrifice—it was therefore that our Lord had to burst out from the bonds of an unoffered humanity, through the gate of death in order that so He might make His exodus from an Egypt—a great world-wide Egypt—through the Red Sea of Passion into the freedom of the life in God.

Our dear Lord as man, taking our nature upon Him, took it with all its difficulties; and He could only wrench it free from its ingrained selfishness, from the bonds by which men strive to keep not only themselves but each other from God, by bursting out through the gate of death, by presenting His Breast to the enmity—the age-long enmity—which man has kept up against God; by going forward in the love of His Father, in spite of this love rousing against Him the deepest, the most natural hatred of fallen man. They hated Him not because He was great, or clever, or beautiful, or beloved. They hated Him because they knew not either Him or His Father. They hated Him for His godliness, because His life was a stream set steadily towards God. Therefore it necessarily came into conflict with the world, which had this for its principle of preservation—to keep God at arm's length; to render Him a bull or goat, if so it might be, but by all means to avoid rendering the

will, the soul, the heart, the life, back to the Father Who had made them. This our Lord Himself teaches us. They hated Him because they had not known either Him or His Father. They did not know the Sonship in Him which bore Him steadily to the Father's Heart. They did not know the love of the Father, drawing Him up into that home of rest. And so all His movements were hateful to them and His life was so essentially in contradiction to the whole current of their work, that it led Him to this surfing place—this breach of the waters—this breaking out of death, because of the impact of two great moral forces; for the force of the Incarnate Word, raising the created humanity in obedience to the Father, met the force of the fallen nature of man steadily turning away from God, refusing to assent, straining to keep its own mind, its own doings, to itself. To hold together and to keep themselves close—that is the desire of mankind; and He Who ascends towards God must face the enmity of the Cross.

This may teach us something—very little, but still something—of the reason why our Lord's joyful sacrifice was stained on our side with the indignity of blood. He came on account of sins—*περὶ ἁμαρτιῶν*. The word is used in the most general possible sense. Somehow, "because of sins," because of the

estrangement of human nature, the Godward life set in our midst became necessarily the crucified life. But it redeemed our fallen nature by its own Godward trend; and only because of the life's Godward movement was the Cross which is our share in it made holy and redeeming and good. It was the holy sacrifice which sanctified that altar, the altar which, as we set it up, had no title to receive in any way the regard of God.

Let us consider a little further if we may, and in terms of our modern daily life which I cannot think will give any sensible man offence, this estrangement of men from God as it has always been and is now. It is an estrangement, a degradation, a falling to pieces of society, which in one aspect, from one point of view, may be spoken of as the result of our solitude—the result of our separation from God. We are told by those who know the world in distant places, that in small communities where men are shut up year after year in a solitary station, in the midst of the wilds, with only a few to deal with—we are told by a well-known writer to remember, even if we cannot understand it—"that all laws weaken in a small and hidden community where there is no public opinion." Now I will be so bold as to say that our human evil is nothing else but this

“station” evil, written out large. What is the evil of the frontier station in India is when written large the evil of the whole of Humanity—because we lack our public, which is God. There is but one public for us to live to; there is but one eye under which we can construct anything which can be called a conduct. And for lack of this public, for lack of this eye under which the true life of man must always be lived, for lack of the public opinion of Heaven, which is God, our whole society went long ago to pieces, simply because we were shut up, creature with creature, in a limited number, bound down to all the penury of our bankrupt condition; for we had lost the riches God meant us to administer. In this state, with our poor character, with our lack of knowledge, and above all things with the want of an eye which we could really appeal to, a heart towards which we could really pour out our life—because of this it was (in one way, this is one aspect of it) that we went to pieces at the first, and go to pieces still. We are a solitary, segregated community of people, unless we have God. It is God alone—the Eye of God, the Thought of God, the Heart of God, the Face of God—it is this alone—nothing else will do and nothing less—which keeps any one of the offices round about us in St. Paul’s

Churchyard honest. It is this alone which makes it worth while to add up our columns fitly, to take our place aright, to be faithful to our wives, to go on with our work, to search our consciences, to get out our sins. It is the Eye of God alone, the Love of God alone, which draws out anything which is in the least good in the nature which He has created. Its whole being is to go back to Him. He is the air in which it lives, even as this air we breathe is the very substance of the plants which flower so brilliantly in it. So also we can live only in the Heart of God. And apart from that, hidden from that, immediately our society, our life, our conduct, our mind, suffer eclipse, degradation, disorganization, sin and death. Now into this society, this disorganization, this disgrace, this helplessness, came the Lord Jesus with His Eye upon the Father; and He walked amongst us before that Face; He led amongst us the Godward life, and He cured us by this. He suffered, the just for the unjust, in the matter of sins, to bring us to God; bore up, by the power of His will, by the patience of His love, bore up the creation which we had degraded, and sanctified it by holding it in this light of the Divine presence which is its life and purity. "If we walk in the light as He is in the light," says St. John, teaching

just this lesson, "we have fellowship one with the other, and the Blood of Jesus His Son cleanseth us from all sin." And that which is the law of our obtaining pardon by His Blood is the law also by which He established the pardon at the first. It was a pardoning effected by light. It was the bringing of the creature into the glory of God—bringing us out of darkness into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. It was the Lord with His Eye upon the true public, the true object of worship, the true object of desire, the true Judge, the true Father. It was He Who taking our nature by a real discipline, by a genuine effort, kept it up there, so that He, sanctifying it in the piece, laid open a door by which we all, through the Blood of Jesus, might also enter into the holiest place, might come into the light, might be redeemed from the disorder, from the hatred, from the sin, from the lust which is in the world through the corruption and falling to pieces still caused by our departure from the Face of God our Father. That is sacrifice triumphant through suffering, bursting its way out by blood because we resisted His passage and dragged back the captain of our salvation, Who would lead us across the river of death into the freedom of a new life. He has to burst from us and, pursued by our

curses, works out the salvation that we need. And then, more particularly, our evil is set forth in the Bible under an expression which is much more than a figure, and which is a fact of to-day, a fact no doubt fit to shock the ears of the polite; the fact, I mean, of the difference between rich and poor. That fact in the Bible is not a mere example, a mere touch; one thing among many with which God finds fault, with which God is displeased. Nay, that difference between the rich and the poor is the very poison, the very wound, the very disgrace from which we suffer. All through the Old Testament there goes that cry—God has taken upon Him the cause of the poor and the oppressed. That is the essence of sin, the making of rich and poor. For at the root of sin, the deepest thing in sin, is covetousness; the desire to keep back to one's self what belongs to God, and belonging to God, is to be used by all the brethren in their turn, in their place, according to their need; the setting up of another title besides necessity for the use of the fruits of the earth. That is the root crime of mankind, covetousness. And from this covetousness, and the cruel division which it makes, spring all our evils. Every form of lust is covetousness, selfish desire; the desire of the neighbour's house; the desire of the neighbour's goods;

the desire of the neighbour's wife. The great division between those who seize and those who lose runs through all life. It is not a division merely of class, of the great and the simple, of the high and the low. It is the old division of the rich and the poor; the old cause of murder; the old tragedy of Cain and Abel. It is the contrast between the receiver and the thief. It is the contrast between the procuress and the poor lass whom she drags down to hell. It is the great division of mankind. There is none so deep as that. Alas! too often it is the division between white and black. It is the great deep-rooted division between the men who have, and hold, and seize, and covet, and will keep for themselves, and those who ask only to be allowed to live and who cry out to God; between those who have need of nothing, and those others, "the hungry, which make oil within our walls, and tread our winepresses and suffer thirst" (Job xxiv. 10, 11). The poor oppressed man—the whole Old Testament is full of his cry, and all the Psalms. "When God maketh inquisition for blood," what does He ask for? "He forgetteth not the complaint of the poor." When God's time for remembrance comes, what is it that He regards? "The poor shall not always be forgotten, the patient abiding of the meek

shall not perish for ever." The words are all on one page of our Prayer Book. When the ungodly stirs up his lust, who is his object? "The ungodly for his own lust doth persecute the poor"; whether it be the ignorant or the noble or the beautiful, or those who have no money or those who have no friends. The ungodly makes boast, of what? Of his crime, of his drunkenness? No; of having his own way; his own "heart's desire." And so the cry all through is, "Arise, O Lord God, and lift up Thine hand; forget not"—what? "Forget not the poor." "Come that Thou mightest take the matter into Thine Hand. The poor committeth himself unto Thee for Thou art the Helper of the friendless. Lord Thou hast heard the desire of the poor, Thou preparest Thine heart and Thine ear hearkeneth thereto, to help the fatherless and the poor unto their right that the man of the earth be no more exalted against them."

Now I would say to you, dear brethren, if you look round for some way to understand the Lord's Passion, and find you cannot grasp it; if you reject as fanciful, or too thinly spun, the kind of thoughts which I have suggested concerning the inward reason of His death, take this for your lesson which every man may grasp. Jesus Christ died—why? Because He was poor; because He had not

enough money; because He had not enough friends; because He was not chosen, but rejected. That is why He died; that is how it was possible; that is how it came to pass. There were deeper things. It was the will of the Lord putting in His light into our fallen world. It was the joy of the Redeemer rising up through our rending nature to God the Father Who was His Home. But in the nearest possible aspect, in the baldest and simplest, and yet quite a true sense, you may say He died because He was on that side of the fence, not on this. He belonged to the helpless; He belonged to the poor; He stood where the dark-skinned people stand to-day; He stood where the ragged people stand to-day; where the ignorant stand to-day; where the friendless stand to-day. Had He been a rich man, had He been a noble, had He been a Roman like St. Paul, we do not know in what manner He could have accomplished His Passion. And poverty we know to be a fundamental character of His work, part of His genuine object, essential to His method of salvation. For we are told that up in Heaven, when His mind stirred to take upon Him our case, He willed not only to empty Himself, but to take upon Himself the form of a slave and to be made in the fashion of a poor man that He might be obedient unto death,

even the death of a slave, the death of the Cross. That division, the division of those who have and those who have not, runs so deep as almost to run to the bottom, and you may say that it is one account of the Saviour's death, that now at last the long groaning which we hear through the Old Testament finds its answer. And how? The poor cried out, "Lord remember the poor who committeth his case unto Thee"; the poor of every station, from the highest poor man, the poor man with a crown who is rejected by his people, to the lowest poor man with the bare feet just driven from his door, the wanderers who "are wet with the showers of the mountains, and embrace the rock for want of a shelter" (Job xxiv. 8). All these alike cry out to the Lord, "Lord remember the poor—the poor committeth his cause unto Thee." And what is the answer of the Lord God—the King of kings, the Sovereign, the Almighty, the Ever Rich? He so accepts their cause as not to carry it as the Roman, by his legal standing, carried his client's plea; not to carry it as our friends take our cause into their hands to hand it on with their good-will, with all the power of their influence. But He so accepted it as to make it His own. He clothed Himself in the naked flesh; He covered Himself with the disgraced habit; He

wore the face of sorrows and was sheltered in the station of contempt. He so accepted the cause of the poor for all ages and for ever up to the last day. There is no poor man, from the poor Christian native in China to the poor unbelieving Englishman who cannot manage to hear the Creed he desires to know, who has not Jesus specially for his brother; for He has so accepted the cause of the poor as to make it His own in His very Person. The cry has gone up, and the old contrast—between the poor man crying to God and God looking down upon the poor—this division between God and the poor has been done away. Age after age the poor stood there before the face of God begging for relief, begging for deliverance from the oppressor. And behold God has leaped the gulf, that great gulf which unless we bridge it now will be found fixed between us and the poor man in Abraham's bosom. While the rich are still hesitating to cross the stream to where the poor lie, God has leaped down out of His Royal throne and made so great a junction between the two that the oppressed and their Avenger are one. The Lord Who should visit—the Lord Whose eyes behold iniquity and search it out—those eyes like a flame of fire; the Lord Who forgetteth not the poor has taken upon Him their cause, and is their own, and is one of

themselves. So that now the poor are avenged by having God in their midst. And by this we are not to think that the Lord has so taken their cause as to take the inability of the poor man ; but rather we are to think that the oppressed is so lifted up as to hold in his bosom the dignity of divine justice. There in the rags is the community with Jesus. There in the oppressed, high and low—in the misunderstood, in the blamed, in the cursed—there in those who bear our scorn, is the special community of Jesus. Can we ask then why He suffered? Do not *they* suffer? Can we ask then why He was kept on the rack? Are *they* allowed to slumber at their ease, to take their rest in peace? Can we ask why He had no place to lay His Head? Have all the poor their mansions ready for them? In your London have you replaced the streets you are obliged to pull down? Do you take care for the poor as the Lord does? I am speaking, I know, to the poor, but I must speak to those who are not poor also. Why should we wonder that Jesus shed His blood? Do not *they* shed their blood for us? Why should we wonder that His sweat was dark like gore? Have you never heard of their sweat and their pain? Of their tears, of their disappointments, of their dangers, of how their daughters are entrapped, of how their

children run to waste, of how their young men lie as it were groaning in all our streets? Why should our salvation be without tears when it is so long a time yet till the "streets of our city shall be full of boys and girls playing" (Zech. viii. 5); full of children praising God? If there is pain in your London, do not be surprised that there is pain in your Saviour, for He has taken upon Him the cause of London, the cause of "the poor who faint away," of the multitudes, of the sick, of the despised, of the rejected, of the sinful, of those we call the fallen, of those who are on the pavement or off the pavement, of those whom we drag through the mud which is the wretched accretion of our wheels of commerce. He has taken their cause, and until they cease from sobbing before the ears of the Most High, until there is "no complaining in our streets," no anguish in our great Empire, till that day comes we ought not to be looking for a key by which to open the lock of the secret of the Saviour's suffering—Who when He came to be holy and meek and just in our midst, leaped the great gulf and clothed Himself in the person of those whose cause He came for ever to avenge; to avenge not by anger and strife and blood, but by pity and by bearing them in His bosom into the home of the eternal Father, where by the prayers of

Lazarus who lies outside our gates may we, through His great mercy, and through a sufficient repentance at last, find some lowly place, if it be but in the poorest quarter of the Heavenly City.

NOTE.—The passages about our divine Saviour's deep and actual community of life with the poor of this world might bear—as my dearest friend shows me—a false meaning. I think they are patient of a true one, and I leave them nearly as they stand in the shorthand. I did not and do not mean that our Lord suffered or was condemned or hated *for being poor*. He was condemned on a charge of treason-blasphemy, and was hated for His actual conflict with the received religious practice of a fallen Church. But His poverty co-operated as an actual cause of His Passion. If Judas had been the paid follower of a rich man he would not have been tempted; had the Saviour been of those who have, a Herodian, a Cæsarian, “one of the rulers,” could His end have taken the same course? Had He been, like Paul, a Roman, He would not have endured the Cross. These things, accidental to a certain form of judgment, are not without substantial significance. Doubtless His poverty was not the determining cause of our Lord's suffering. Doubtless also it was not for nothing that the road by which He actually passed to the Cross was the road of the poor.

IV

THURSDAY IN HOLY WEEK

“So after He had washed their feet, and had taken His garments, and was set down again, He said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call Me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.”—ST. JOHN xiii. 12–15.

And earlier :

“What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.”—ST. JOHN xiii. 7.

WE see that our Lord, willing that His people should know the meaning of His Passion, invites them to learn through actions which we call common; speaks to them in terms which sound to our ignorance, below the level of mystery or revelation; gives them an example of service for their imitation. By action in what we suppose the unsupernatural sphere of conduct, He will lead them to know what it is that He does for them in things past finding out; what

is the great and unsearchable mystery of our redemption by His Passion and Death. He will show them through the common thing, through the moral conformity which seems to us within the scope of nature, according to the law of charity and through the obedience of kindness. Thus by imitation they shall come to know what in inward truth He does. "What I do thou knowest not now"—either in this action or in any of the great actions of Holy Week. "But thou shall know hereafter, for I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." It is His word to St. Peter, who looking back in the meekness which we hear in his first epistle transmits the lesson to us—"He left you an example that ye should follow His steps" (1 Peter ii. 21). And so yesterday we seemed to see that to us, separated by so long a history, as we search to know the mystery of Christ crucified for us, there comes to greet and to help us the common mystery, the universal fact of pain and loss. Pain and sorrow help us to climb to Him by the two approaches of pity and of patience. The pain we bear joins us to our Lord when He bestows on us His gift of patience. The pain we witness is a link to Him through His real community with the suffering, and calls for the pity through which we minister to Him in them. By this double access we may come into the law of His

Being, and even know in part how it fared with Him when He hung for us upon the Cross, deserted by men, hidden from the Face of God. By pity and by patience we come. Christ has died for us ; therefore we are to be loving, tender-hearted, pitiful one to the other—"forgiving one another even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven" us. Christ has offered Himself as sacrifice for sins once. Therefore we are to have patience, in conformity and communion, because "Christ also suffered for sins once, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God." And we are wise if we know that this following of His example, this patience under pain, this pity towards the weak, are not merely accessories of the central mystery ; but that, because in God is nothing unnecessary, nothing unmeaning, there lies in these things ready for our grasp, the very mystery of His redeeming love. And in truth we have in our Holy Week no surer access to the Lord, than by the way of penitence for sins, and by the way of pity and of patience in face of sufferings, patience in our own sufferings—pity for the sufferings of the neighbour. And this great truth, that spiritual access to our Lord is secured by the following of His example according to His word (as when He said, "If any man will come after Me, let him take up his cross daily and follow Me"), all this is put before us in two

great significant actions to-day, the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist and the Maundy—the Lord's command—the duty of the feet-washing. In these two ways, communion and charity, by a substantial communication with Jesus Christ, we are to be held up firmly into the healing truth of the precious Blood. Let us consider them in turn.

First, the Maundy and then the Eucharist. Our Lord did the Maundy that we might know what He was, what He would have us to do, what is the mystery of His Passion and of our salvation. It is a mystery of charity, it belongs to the law which is so familiar to us, so hard to fulfil, the duty of giving out of our store, of bearing the burden of the weak. And we are to notice that He comes to it in His Majesty, as our Lord and Master. When He stoops, He reminds His disciples of His greatness—"Ye call me Master and Lord and ye say well for so I am." He girded Himself for the work because, St. John says, "He knew that He came forth from God and goeth again to God." It was because of the dignity of His Divine origin, it was because of the prospect of the eternal glory with which He would clothe our humanity in His Person, it was on the eve of His exaltation that He now seemed, to our sense, to stoop—rose from supper, left the feeding; made Himself a minister, sat no longer

to be served ; girded Himself with the towel, took water and washed all their feet in turn, yea, even the feet of Judas into whose heart Satan had already shot the arrow of treachery. Right through to the end went the feet-washing, done by our Lord, in the special consciousness (may we dare to say), at any rate in the special revelation of the glory of His Divine prerogative and home, because He came forth from the Father and returneth to the Father. Knowing all this, He loved His own unto the end, and girded Himself, and took water and washed, saying to them, "I am your Lord and Master, ye call me so, and ye do well, for so I am." So He stooped ; but He stooped in His Majesty ; and it is well for us to remember this. For we lose in part the benefit of His humility, if we think of it as some passing eclipse of the real and essential greatness of Christ. We are not to think of His Passion and Death, of the mocking and His silence, of His scourging and His imprisonment, as we think of the indignities which we put, for example, upon our King in the great Revolution three centuries ago. We are not to think of them as the partial and temporary obscuring of a sovereignty which will presently emerge and reassert itself. Nay, these things—this humiliation, this lowness, this poverty—these are the glory of God. This is how man must be when God

is in his heart. This is the reversal of our disgrace. He was poor in order that by His poverty the stain of our gold might be wiped off from the face of man, the yellow dust no longer disfigure the brow created for a heavenly crown of love. Even so

“Wrath by His meekness,
And by His health sickness,
Are driven away
From our immortal day.”¹

This poverty, this emptiness, this lowliness, this obedience, this ministration, these are the marks of Him who is greatest of all. “Let him who is the greatest among you be your minister.” Here is His exaltation, here is the throne of God’s glory when it sets itself among men.

So this was no evil thing to be reversed, this was no stripping to be again clothed upon; but in this humility, in this sacrifice, in this bearing of the burden of others, Jesus asserted His unity of being with God, Who is always the poor man of the world, who does not keep one sparrow’s feather for His own, who reserves in the unsearchable glades of Heaven no spot exclusively for Himself; the Lord God, who is as some great King, who has thrown open all His crown lands to be trodden under foot of man and who, in the wide reaches even of unimaginable existence, has nothing so for His

¹ William Blake, *Night*.

own that it shall not belong to all men if they will come to Him. God the great pauper, God the poor man, shows the unity of Jesus with Himself, by making Him on the earth altogether nothing—do service, bear humiliation, be despised. This is the glory of the Lord's eternal riches, battling against the false riches which are poverty—those scramblings and scratchings together of the perishing things of this world, which are the very mark of the penury of our spiritual existence.

And so, let us understand it, the stooping is not something to be reversed, the stooping lies in the road of His exaltation. "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him." And accordingly when He was seen of one again in Heaven, when St. John fell at His feet as dead, and then looked up in answer to the merciful voice, he saw the same Lord in His transfiguration, still "girded about the paps with a golden girdle," the transfigured symbol of the service which He has made eternally His own, the girdle of a priest, the girdle of a minister, the golden girdle, mark of a service which He has put next His heart. Round the breast, close to His heart, lies the mark of a perpetual servitude and ministry to all His brethren.

That is the feet-washing. It is not some defeat of the Lord's majesty which must pre-

sently be redressed, but it is the exhibition of the law of His greatness, of the power of His salvation, an exhibition of that which has a short name we know well, the name of Love. It invites us to contemplate the eternal victory and divine nature of love. "No man hath seen God at any time," but if he loves the brethren—loves them not in word but in deed, in service and in feet-washing—he shall know God; for "he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God."

And then, on the other hand, the Lord Jesus, showing us this mystery of service, shows us also the mystery of offering to God. He gives us the Holy Eucharist, the communication of His sacred humanity. He gives us herein the power of His Body and His Blood, He makes us become men as He was Man, He draws our hearts to be hearts like His human Heart, He would have our blood pulse with the loving-kindness which was in His blood—His life. This is the Holy Eucharist. Sweeping aside all difficulties by which Christians are divided, here, let us say, in this holy mystery, the Lord Jesus bestows upon us substantially the real power, the real communication of His sacred human nature, God-filled with might and with love. But even in this mystery, which is thus primarily a mystery of our feeding by God, of the giving to us of that which was

not our own, even here is the note of tenderness one to another, of brotherly love. Even here, down to the smallest details—"Take ye this and divide it among yourselves." "Drink ye all of you of this." So far does this principle of community and of brotherliness extend, that it regards the minor morals of courtesy. And later, but still in the Church's first age, there is St. Paul to teach, "When ye come to the Lord's Table wait one for the other, be careful of each other's feelings, shame not those that have not houses to eat and drink in, preserve a seemly order, see that all take their places—wait ye one for another." Even in these lesser things we ought to see no mere decoration or useless fringe of the gospel mystery, but the will of the Lord of Love coming out there, holding fast there in the quiet manners of daily life, the important details of true Christian ceremonial. For what is the true ceremonial of the Altar?

The ceremonial of brotherly courtesy, and gentle consideration; of waiting one for another; of seeing that no man is offended, no man shamed, no man abashed, no man taken out of his depth, no man hindered in his walk to the Lord's Table; but every one welcomed, every one guided, every one comforted, every one consoled. In the care for the poor, for the ignorant, and in consideration for those who

differ from us ; there are most fit adornments and worthy accessories of the great mystery of the Lord's Sacrifice. And from His feeding of our poor souls—linked with the mystery, the truth about brotherly love, about courtesy to the poor—we go on further to see that this feeding which we receive as one family, as one body, in the orderliness of authority and courtesy and tenderness,—this feast of the Body and Blood of the Lord is the eternal offering ; is that One Body by which we are sanctified—is that which He offered through the Holy Ghost once for all. And in this Gift we also are offered ; not only mysteriously, as men say—not only by some transference unseen of our being and life into the Life and Being of Jesus, given in an unknown fashion to us—but also in the active sacrifice of daily choice. This is a part of the truth of the eternal sacrifice, of the eternal sacrifice in Heaven, and of our coming up into it by the Holy Eucharist. Yet we somewhat miss that more prosaic meaning of the Eucharistic sacrifice which is so particularly characteristic of St. Augustine, the truth that we also, if we will, if we are good, if we are penitent, if we are loving, lie there upon the Altar, joined there into the bread and wine which are offered—the whole congregation and the separate individuals—to the Lord in a glorious

community with Jesus in the very heart of His Life, that Life which is the taking up of humanity into the Father's acceptance. There in the supreme moment of the redemptive life we can be joined in, we can pass on, we can reach home by the way which has been opened to us and sanctified through the veil, the Way that is His Flesh. We also, having a High Priest, enter in with spiritual sacrifices, with the gift of heart and life and worship and hope, all filled and nourished by this same God-filled humanity; we also get home by the road of love and sacrifice to the eternal Heart.

And upon that thought I would add two words. First this: our sacrifice, our love to Christ, our wish to belong to Him, can never be true, our acceptance in Him can never be sure, our washing by the precious Blood can never quite convince us, unless it comes out through the charity of which we spoke—unless it comes out through the offering which we make of ourselves to God. On the one hand washing, cleansing, good-conduct, peace of mind are given through the sacrifice. On the other hand the sacrifice seizes us and holds us through confession of sins, through abandonment of faults, through love of the neighbour.

The mystery must run both ways. We must strive to reach Jesus through the real

acknowledgment of our faults. But we shall only find true confession through the real accepting of Christ. First, we must know the Precious Blood of which this week speaks, by the true utterance of our sins; and if there is any whom we have wronged, here we have within our grasp the act we need. Or if we have wronged the Church and fallen away gravely from the law of Christian life, we owe something to the Church, we owe the Church truth. We must seek of God, we must pray God by His Holy Spirit to show us how we may pay what we owe to the brotherhood—to the body in which God has set us. Not as something additional and insignificant, but as the very sacrament of our life in Christ, we must have peace in the body. For it was unto this peace we were called when we were called unto Jesus Christ Himself. So there is one thing. If we desire to know Him, to inherit His Blood, to be surely saved by Him, we must see that by action we arrive at Him, claim Him, seize hold of Him. But on the other hand—and this seems to me more practically important—on the other hand we shall never arrive at good actions, we shall never arrive at good honest charity, we shall never attain to true confession and real restitution, excepting by that sacrifice of Jesus Christ accepted. If on the one hand true community

with Christ requires the obedience of a life, how much more deeply, and at the same time, how much more immediately important it is to remember that we shall never arrive at a good life excepting by the mercy of Christ accepted by us as we are, by praying to Christ to take us that we may be offered to the Eternal Father.

My second practical word is this. That thought of an offering to the Father means to those who know their own hearts a most real advance in the art of holy living, in the art of holy prayer. In a life of grace you may perhaps mark these three stages. There is at first the state of the man, who tries to be good in order that he may reach Christ; to make his soul right, that afterwards he may become religious. He is in the Old Testament state and strives to conquer sin as a preliminary to receiving the mercy of God. He is already arrived at the track, but alas! he makes no progress along it, he stands beating at the wicket. And the second stage is reached when men understand that they are to receive from God all the benefit that God has given us by His only-begotten Son, born and crucified and risen again, and that all we have to do is continually to keep the heart open, that this rain of Divine grace which is Jesus Christ, may enter in and change and lift us

up, cleansing us and making us strong in a life of righteousness. That is the great second stage, when we understand that long before our penitence, even while we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly, and that there is now no condemnation for them that are in Christ Jesus, who will accept Him, who will take the offer, who will open the heart, who will enter by the Holy Ghost into this mystery of "Christ in us, the hope of glory." The coming in, the visit of Jesus, the pouring down of the Holy Ghost; that is the second stage of a life of grace. Now the man begins to make progress, now he continually renews his struggle, and now day by day, however little he knows it, he has his victories, or God wins true victories in him. But there is a third stage which comes to us after disappointment, comes to us when we have found how often we lapse from the memory of Christ, how often we close our hearts against the incoming of the Holy Ghost, how often we fail to look in and visit that mystery in us—"Christ in us, the hope of glory"; how little we know by daily experience that Christ is in us of a truth. When we begin to tremble and fear lest after all we be reprobate and have lost Him, then God encourages us, and recovers us by the invitation to remember a still higher way to Him, if it may be so

called, the way, that is to say, of offering oneself soul and body to enter into God instead of striving only to open the narrow heart that God may enter in. And because the road in God is wide and open, because the Heart of Jesus, which is the wicket, is so great that no man may miss it; because this way is victorious and sanctified by the Blood of Jesus, a way made open to the heavenly place, therefore we do in fact find that the man who thus frames in his thought the fashion of his approach to God finds it more secure, finds it more constant, finds it so that even in his worst mood he does not err therein. In his moods, in his darkness, in his impenitence as he calls it, in his grief and pride; he feels as if a veil were between him and God. There can be, he feels, no entrance, and he must wait until Christ pierces the veil of sin and grief, to enter in once more. He cries out to Him to visit his soul.

“Dark and cheerless,” he cries—

“Dark and cheerless is the morn
Unaccompanied by Thee;
Joyless is the day’s return,
Till Thy mercy’s beams I see;
Till they inward light impart,
Glad my eyes, and warm my heart.”

“Visit then,” he prays—

“ Visit then this soul of mine,
Pierce the gloom of sin and grief,
Fill me, Radiancy Divine,
Scatter all my unbelief ;
More and more Thyself display,
Shining to the perfect day.”

And it is an appealing cry to God ; it goes to His Heart, and it springs naturally from ours. But it is not always ours. There is a time when the heart cannot even cry out for Christ to come. There is a time when the door at which He knocks seems bolted, or as if we had lost the passage which leads to it, so that we cannot open it to admit the Guest we long for. And at such times, when we are dead and dry, when we grope in the corridors of our dark house of life, and cannot find the key of consciousness to let the true Light in, then opens out this other way ; there shines the broad path of Christ's Heart. Then we remember the great word which answers that in which He has said to us, “ Behold, I stand at the door and knock ; if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in unto him.” We remember there is another word, “ Knock and it shall be opened.” There is the heart of Jesus waiting to let us in. There lies the road of sacrifice broad and shining before us—“ the path of the just that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” And those among us, those

among you, dear brethren, who know your own hearts, will bear me out if I say that in our darkest gloom, in our worst mood, in our most obstinate impenitence as it seems, we can yet rise up, we can still offer ourselves as we are to God, that He may take us in Jesus Christ and disentangle the confused motives and rescue the treasure which lies hid, and purge away the dross that encumbers and make us truly His own, as we offer effort and love, or hatred or pain or despair to God, in a mass with our best hopes and our best desires, through Jesus Christ, Who has gone before us to show us a path. He took our human nature, and with it trod up to God through the way of the Cross, opening for us a gate into the most holy way which is His flesh, that we also, because we have a High Priest, should thus in Him come boldly to the Throne of Grace, offering ourselves, body, soul and spirit, a sacrifice, willing and loving and acceptable to God, which is our reasonable service, our spiritual liturgy, our effectual union with Jesus Christ, crucified for us and living for ever for us, in us, we in Him, in the Heavenly places.

GOOD FRIDAY

INTRODUCTORY

MY Brethren, I believe we shall best husband our time if we spend at first more than a few moments in making the nature of our Devotion clear to ourselves. The work before us is a work of prayer. We claim this sacred Three Hours, a space in which to yield ourselves with special love and trust to the care of God; in which to receive a real share in the sacred memories of the Passion. By the Power of the Holy Ghost—"in the Spirit"—we seek to know Jesus according to the mystery of His suffering obedience even unto death, the death of the Cross. And in this search our object is not past and distant, but actual and near. We do not attempt so to stir our fancies and emotion as to make that appear to be present, which is not present in fact. But, praying in the Holy Ghost, keeping ourselves in the love of God, we hope by God's mercy really to arrive, in the true life of

the soul, at real facts which are really waiting for our faith to-day.

Let us consider what are the great realities which belong as much to us and to this day as they belong to the day of our Divine Saviour's Passion. Is there any abiding fact which is common to the two days and links them securely together, making our watch as sacred as the hours when Mary stood with John beside the Cross—facts of to-day which were facts on the morning of the saving Death, and have not changed? It is by these we shall make our approach, and not by seeking to imagine, as if in dramatic representation, that our Lord is crucified afresh. Rather, we know, the very foundation of true prayer is the adoration of our Lord as He is in Heaven. "As for our God He is in Heaven, He hath done whatsoever pleased Him." We are to lift up our hearts to Jesus Christ, near to us, at the right hand of the Father in unspeakable bliss and glory and power.

But so seeking, we have two realities to-day in common with that past day of the Passion. The first of them—the nearest of them to us in some sense—is our own sin and grief and weakness; and, related to these, the disorder, the evil, the sadness that are in the world round about us, and the failure that is even in the Holy Church

in its earthly members. There is that great reality of sin, of sorrow, of pain, of grief, of emptiness, the same to-day as it was upon the day that our Lord suffered; the world is truly lying before Him, needing His help to-day as then, still full of darkness and cruel habitations. Each generation is born in sin; the work of salvation has to be done afresh within the space of each man's life. A Christian ancestry in the order of nature does not avail to lighten that curse. Every man as he comes into the world comes with the same need of God as the first fallen man; comes with the entire inability to cure his evil, to reach to the Eternal Life. That is the first great reality of to-day; the reality of evil, in ourselves, in the world, in the Church; the reality of the sinner's guilt and the sinner's need.

And over against this is an answering reality—the Heart, the Love of Jesus Christ, our Lord, God and Man, “The same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.” He waits for us, near to us, nearer to us than our own frame and circumstances; nearer than the neighbour by our side—“nearer to us than breathing, and closer than hands and feet”—yet at the right hand of the Father. He waits for us, strong and constant, and having in His heart still the true reality of His Passion, its moral fountain; that from which all His suffering, all His

obedience sprang, the Mind of Christ Jesus, the pity for the sinner, the loyalty to the Father, the willingness to undergo the Cross, even unto the Death—all this is in Him still in the unchangeable constancy of His Heart, which is a human Heart taken up into the power of Divine Life, accepted and made part of the perpetual property and attributes of God. And yet this Heart, though constant and unchanging, has in it movement, variety, life for all our needs. Though it stands there constant and the same, pouring out like a fountain the unfailing stream of mercy, yet that mercy is living, and because living and personal, therefore fitting separately each part of our need; every character which comes before Him; all our trouble, all our sorrow. It possesses in itself both variety of character to meet every single heart, and movement of change, to pursue and accompany and save the sinner through all the stages of the course of salvation.

Take those three thoughts; the constant existence of our need; the constant perseverance of the Saviour's love, hiding within itself the true moral, mental reality of the Passion, having in it now those elements of love which were expressed then in the precious blood-shedding; lastly, the various richness within that love to meet all the diverse poverty of

souls, the moving quickness with which it follows all the changing perils of a single spirit, all the cravings of renewed sonship, all the steps of our restoration. These are the great realities. And the Holy Spirit, "Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son," and also issues forth through the humanity of Jesus Christ unto us, yet residing in Him in fulness of Grace and Truth, He is at home in our hearts, He knows His way to our thoughts, to our needs. He can lift up this faculty of ours which is our misery, our sinfulness, our guilt, our emptiness; He can lift it up so as to be not only capable but also filled with the refreshment of the Divine Life out of the Heart of Jesus Christ. He belongs to God and man in Christ, and He knows His way to each man's need. And if we pray to Him He will bring us into the presence of the Saviour, to be truly washed by the reality of His Blood, to be truly brought home to God, truly united one to the other in Christ, Who through His Cross has made peace, bringing back those who were alienated into the Home of God—making them one by His blood.

Then further and just once more, as we thus lie before God in our silent prayer, lifting up our hearts in our hands unto Him, begging for the Holy Spirit to bring us into the light of Jesus Christ, the once crucified and now

ever living as a Lamb fresh slain upon the Altar that is in the midst of the Throne of power and love—as we thus pray to the Holy Ghost we have one more great help from God; we have the word of Jesus. This word comes to be the completion of our desire; it comes to be the spark for our love, to kindle us into true sacrifice. It comes to be the very weapon with which the Spirit will work, will pierce our hearts, will loose our bonds, will set free our feet. For this word of Jesus Christ is no light unnecessary or failing word. The seven words from the Cross are the words of “Him who is real,”¹ Who is the Truth, Who is God; and they come forth by the necessity of His Being, out of the fountain of His reality, of His Love. They are the true expression, the true explanation, the true revelation of the real meaning and power of His Passion. Finally, they are not only the words of Him Who is true, words of revelation, telling us what is waiting for us in Him; but they are the words of Him Who is the Creator, they are the words of Him Who is the Word “through Whom all things were made”; and therefore they not only reveal to us the secret of His Heart, but they create in us by the power of the Holy Ghost the answering power to receive His Grace. They are the words of the

¹ 1 John v. 20.

true, and they are the words of the Creator, which shall not return to Him empty, but shall accomplish His saving will in us. By these words there may be such a renewal in consciousness and activity of the powers of the regenerate life that we may be truly said even to-day to be begotten again unto a lively hope by the power of the Resurrection of Him Whom now in the mystery of His Passion we come to know through the help of the Holy Ghost.

Let this be the direction of our devotion, this the mode of our effort. We are come to pray, we seek to know by the Holy Ghost Jesus as He is in Heaven, yet we seek to know Him according to the mystery of His Passion, in those elements of His Heart which were expressed in His blood-shedding. We come to know Him, living, energizing, moving, setting Himself side by side with each sinner according to his character; moving along with each man according to the progress of his redemption. And we come to know Him through His Holy words, adoring them as his own utterance, recognizing in them the guide to truth, determined not to put our meaning into them but to seek that they may come, a seed of truth, into our hearts. We come to listen to the words of Him Who is the Truth, and we come with hope because we come to

listen to the words of Him Who is the Creator. And we pray that these holy seven utterances sinking down into hearts not unprepared, made soft by the dew of His grace, may through the fostering power of the Holy Ghost bring forth fruit in us unto everlasting life. And this we do for ourselves one by one; for the holy Church at large; for all poor sinners; for the heathen and those lying destitute outside the Gospel. Lastly, our prayer is for dying men and women and children, who, by their dying on this day, seem to claim a special share in the prayers of those who come to profit by the death of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

THE FIRST WORD

FATHER, FORGIVE THEM; FOR THEY KNOW NOT
WHAT THEY DO

“Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”—ST. LUKE xxiii. 34.

I HAVE, you see, set our aim low. There are higher things than those of which I spoke. There are souls empowered by God's visitation to enter into so loving a sympathy with Jesus Christ that they are indeed, in such a contemplation as we seek for, made the partakers of His inward passion. But, seeing that numbers of us are gathered together, we seek for something which is within the reach of all and to which the road is open and ready and plain for every one. In each Word, therefore, or after each Word I shall try to gather my thoughts under these three heads:—first we are to learn from the Saviour what is the sinner's need; then we seek to know what is the cure He bestows upon that need; and, thirdly, we ask what is the price which the God-Man has paid that we may

have the cure. Our need ; the cure ; the price. Under these three heads time after time I invite you to offer your hearts in prayer to God.

So then, taking Him for our guide, we learn from the first word what is the sinner's first need. We learn—and the old lesson needs continually to be re-learned—from the first word of the Saviour on the Cross, that the sinner's first evil is his guilt. There is the first evil, there is the beginning of that which has to be conquered piece by piece. The sinner is at enmity with God. He is under God's wrath, or his heart is filled with wrath which is really and truly directed against God Himself, his Father. And the cure for his guilt—the cure for this first beginning of his evil, the first thing which must be removed, the first stone to be rolled away—the cure for all this is free pardon, pure remission of sins. There is a truth most familiar, and yet not always operative. We forget that we must have pardon to start with. We think of pardon, of freedom from guilt, of peace with God, as if it were the far-off end of a religious life, as if it were the goal of many endeavours which we might hope to attain to at the end of a long life ; and so we have to learn afresh evermore that the beginning, the foundation, the wicket-gate is peace, is remission, is pardon. This is not the end of a Christian's

life, but this is its necessary beginning. There is no stirring in spiritual life whatsoever until we are in peace with God, and so this, which is the continual and abiding foundation of our life,—for all through “Mercy embraceth us on every side,” and we must ever live as sinners continually forgiven—must be thought of also as the beginning. We forget this partly because we put off our repentance and are unwilling to disclose our faults until we have a better record with which to introduce them, and partly because we do not know how willing God is, how willing is the Saviour to pardon. We have to be reminded that long ago, before we even began to repent, yea even before we sinned, before we were born, “Christ died for the ungodly.” Before there was a penitent on the earth, when all men were in rebellion, while we—mankind—were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly. And so as He mounts His Cross, when first He takes His place upon the Throne of intercession, He pleads first of all for pardon, to teach us for evermore that this is our first need, that we cannot even approach to the glory of His Cross excepting by the power of His prayer, and to teach us also that He is willing to save to the uttermost all those who come to God the Father by Him. You, my dear brethren, who have much to work out in your lives,

much which entangles, much which frets, learn this, that the beginning of each day's work of grace is receiving gently, patiently, contentedly, the pardon which Jesus Christ perpetually pleads for us, wins for us from the Father. Enter in with a full assurance of faith. We are justified from sin by the Blood of Jesus Christ, and if we will but believe it there is no longer any condemnation for those who will come unto Christ Jesus and receive the perfect remission of their sins—their oldest sins, their newest sins, the sins of this morning, the sins from which we come to our prayer, the sin which besets us in our moments of silence—all this is perpetually washed and cleansed by the Blood of Jesus Christ. For this He prays for us still to-day as He prayed in the first instant of His Crucifixion. "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." Let us take that deeply and practically to our hearts.

You also, dear brethren, who have entered upon the life of prayer, who desire to know Jesus and the Resurrection, who come day by day to the work of meditation and find yourselves hindered and disappointed, ask yourselves whether what you need is not something surer to come by than any marvellous or special visitation. What you need is only this peace, pardon, the rolling away of guilt.

When this veil goes you shall see the Father in His mercy, the Face of the King, and shall be brought in by the Grace of Jesus Christ our Lord. And so, as we think of Him in our silence, nailed upon the cruel Cross, His Hands and His Feet pierced for our sins, and then the wood lifted up, and set with a cruel shock into the grave prepared for its foot, and the Saviour knowing and feeling the weight of the sins of the whole world in His flesh—for “He bare our sins in His own Body on the tree”—when you seek, in those thoughts which all through this time I do not attempt to express but leave to the love of your silent prayers, to apprehend Him in your silence, pray to Jesus Christ that He may not be disappointed of that which is His first object—our washing, our cleansing, our peace; that initial beginning of the spiritual life which is the laying down of the arms which resist God, the ceasing to cry out against Him, the ceasing to cloak our sins, the setting up of our cross, which so opens the door of the heart that the pardon which is our Saviour’s first will, penetrates and lays hold of all the being. Pray that this may be His, that He may not be disappointed of this.

Quærens me sedisti lassus,
Redemisti, crucem passus;
Tantus labor non sit cassus.

Hang not in vain upon the cross for me! Pour not out in vain the love of pardon while my heart is closed, but grant with Thy gift of pardon also the gift of honesty, of the open heart, that the sins which have grown old in my conscience may to-day be washed away, that the sin which so easily besets me in spite of many repentances may to-day be caught and seized and destroyed by the power of thy love. Let the pardon of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who by the grace of God tasted death for all men, come unto me that He may have this for the beginning of His reward. And then before we part with this Word, think for a moment of the state of those for whom first He prayed, of their ignorance, for this is a consolation and an encouragement also for us. He prayed for them because of their ignorance—"They know not." Had they known what they were doing, says the Apostle, "They would not have crucified the Lord of Glory." They were deceived by the evil one, they were made his tools, they executed this unspeakable crime of slaying God in the Flesh, not knowing it. Therefore He prayed for their pardon. But remember, their ignorance was not a reason for their going without pardon. Their ignorance did not dispense them from their guilt, but their ignorance was His reason for making that prayer on their

behalf, which because of their ignorance they could not make themselves. Put the ignorance, not next to the word "forgive"—"Father forgive them because they are ignorant," but take their ignorance to be the reason of the Saviour's prayer—"Father forgive them—I thy Son express their need for them because they know not what they do." Their ignorance does not dispense them from the need of pardon, but becomes in God's mercy their title to inherit the Saviour's prayer. For consider; their ignorance would not have led them into this great crime had they done the thing they knew; had each man done his duty in his place; had the false witness kept the law of Moses which he knew from his youth, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour"; had the people obeyed the sayings of the Psalms, which declare that the wicked slay the righteous man with the sword of their mouth, with the cry of their tongue; had the High Priests really ministered the Law; had Pilate done the duty of a faithful magistrate, there would have been no crime. For the avoidance of this unspeakable wrong there needed only that each man should do the duty which he knew, that each man should avoid the crime whose features were perfectly well known to him. They knew not that they crucified the Lord of

Glory, but they were not guiltless; because they were doing the characteristic actions of their life—the characteristic action of fallen man; they were persecuting the poor, they were slandering the brother, they were selfish, they were willing that one man should die for the people, they were unwilling to hear instruction, they would not pause to know, to repent, to let the light come into their hearts. And so their ignorance does not absolve them, they need for their absolution the blood of the Sinless Sufferer—the prayer of Jesus Who prays for them because they are ignorant, Who prays for us in our ignorance, Who sees our faults as we cannot see them, Who sees the iniquity even of our holy things, Who sees how dreadfully we have misused our life—our very bodily life sometimes. Fortune, opportunity, means of grace have been wasted. He knows all this as we do not, and we must cry to Him, “Saviour, plead for me not according to the guilt that I know, but according to the guilt that Thou alone knowest; pour down streams of cleansing, not according to my idea and knowledge of my need, but according to Thy sight of my blackness. And as before Thy sight I lie foul as foulness is in the sight of God, so pour down the abundance of mercy, mercy upon mercy through the merit of Thy saving Blood,

that I may come to be clean as God counts cleanness, washed and made pure, whiter than snow. Even as now I am blacker than I know, make me to be whiter than I hope. Grant me the grace to enter in, to acknowledge this first need and to adore that which is its price—for the price of this first answer to our first need is the Saviour's accursedness—the Saviour's being made a curse for us. In order that we might be pardoned He was made sin; in order that we might be blessed and sacred He was made accursed, hanging upon the accursed tree. By his accursedness—by his acceptance of this sign and aspect and figure of guilt—by His taking upon Him the place of the sinner, we, who are sinners, enter into the place of the righteous, are accepted into the Home of the Father, are clothed with the robe that belongs to the good Son, and are accepted into the peace which we forfeited. Let it not be in vain. Now on your knees think of these three things.

Think of your need, pray God to show you your guilt; think of how fully He supplies that need with His abundant pardon; think of the price He has paid. He was made sin for us upon the accursed tree. Think of His pain, of His rejection, of how they mocked Him, of how they cast Him out as unworthy to be amongst them. Pray God to give us grace to

put away false shame, to take to us the acknowledgment of the sins which He acknowledged for us; that we, now making that confession which He made for us Who is sinless, may become the righteousness of God in Him, through His grace Who, as He first mounted the Cross, prayed for the pardon which we need to-day, and which to-day He will pour out upon every soul in this place who kneels before Him in faith.

THE SECOND WORD

TO-DAY SHALT THOU BE WITH ME IN PARADISE

“And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him, saying, If Thou be Christ save Thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked Him saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into Thy Kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.”—ST. LUKE xxiii. 39-43.

SURELY that blessed event, which was the last event while the light still shone upon the Cross before the supernatural darkness fell, surely that helps us to understand, almost to enter into, the joy that is in the Cross, the joy that was in the Cross. We have to remember that all through His Passion Christ was filled with joy. His loving Heart, so long straightened for mankind, is now leaping forth in the accomplishment of salvation. He is quickened indeed in the Spirit, though He be put to death in the flesh; and

as He suffers for us, His quickened Spirit bursts out into preaching, into holy prophecy, into the winning of souls. And here, just after His first prayer, when He has in His holy words set forth the meaning and purpose of His Passion—to save the ignorant sinner from the sin which he is too darkened to confess—when He has set forth thus the great purpose of His Passion, there followed the glory of success; the one success which can enlighten the heart of man here on earth, the glory of turning a sinner from the error of his ways, of adding one to the Kingdom of the Father's love. This apostolic joy, this essential joy of all Christians, which lies in the spreading of the Redeemer's peace, this was our Lord's; it came to Him for His great consolation here in the opening of His Passion. And let us recognize in this, in the good thief's cry to Him, and his faith—that marvellous faith, by which he saw the Saviour, saw His glory in spite of His humiliation, such a faith as we can never show, for we have not known Him until after He has been shown to be the Son of God with power—let us recognize in this faith the perpetual hopefulness which is in man. Truly there must never be despair of the sinner, no, not even of our own sins. Our sins follow us. They tell us our past is in us, and we have over and

over again been called upon to remember this rootedness of our own sins in ourselves as a cause for grief and for fear. I would rather think of it as a cause of perpetual hope. Just because the past deeds are not planted out there in the wild of the world, but the old guilt is here in the heart, therefore it is still within the reach of the Saviour, of the Holy Ghost, of the Father, Who by still keeping my love, still keeping words of prayer upon my lips, teaches me to hope, teaches me that this very truth—that the sins of the past accompany me all along the way of life—this very fact is the title of my penitence, the reason for my hope. For if the river of my life bears thus all the volume of past actions, if it has upon its bosom the stain of past disgrace, if it hides within its current the effect of past foolishness; therefore that weakened current, that stained surface, that volume of faults, is here to-day passing through the lock-gates, as it were, of a moment's experience, and may to-day be taken and arrested, and turned by God, Who "turneth the hearts of men as the rivers of water."

Years ago, a little boy, in a lesson about sin, was taught that in sin it is as when a child flies his kite carelessly and leaves it fixed in some tree which he cannot climb. There is the child below desiring to

undo his fault, but the symbol and the consequence of his mistake is up there aloft, tangled in the branches which he cannot touch. There is the hole through the window where the stone went, far above out of reach. Thus, we were taught, you can from your low station fling the missile which hurts, which kills, but you cannot climb up to cure, to save, to repair. Your sins must find you out. They lie there in the inaccessible past, in the distance of land and sea which you cannot cover, in the hearts of men which you cannot heal; and there is truth in all this. There are the consequences of our faults in others—alas! for that. But every one of those hearts in which the sin is, though it increases our fault, is the heart of one in the hands of the Father, in the hands of one wiser than we are. Our cure and the cure of others is not reserved for us. They lie near to God, and our guilt lies not there in the past. It has not clung to the darkened cloisters where we spent our school-days. Our foolish words do not linger there as a poisonous mist in the chambers where of old we played and worked, and were foolish and careless and idle. But they lie—the severe preacher tells it us—in our hearts, in our character, in our body, in the fibre of that movement which makes our daily life. There is the sole reality, there is

the eternal consequence; and that, thank God, lies near beneath His hand. Life is like some river which, coming down from distant springs, yet still lies under the arch of sky, can still be moved, can still be turned, even as one of our great commanders in India once turned the current and direction of an immemorial stream, made it choose the alternative watershed, turned it from one side of a range of mountains, and made it water a province which, from past the memory of man, had been waterless. Even so God still presides at the fountain springs of our life. He is above our sin and shame. He is nearer even than our latest crime. He knows the way to us better than Satan does, who so tricks and plays upon us, making discord of the music of our lives. Nearer than sin, deeper than our shame and fear, closer than our closest grief, more our own than hands and frame, lies the Saviour's love, lies the Father's Heart, lies the power of the Spirit. There is always hope for us. He will take us, and turn us, and change us. Yea to-day, if we bring this stream, in the division of it which we call to-day—that is enough for Him—to His feet, He will so change and cleanse it that it shall be pure, yea even to its springs. That is what the lesson of the thief teaches us—the perpetual possibility of reform.

But then we must go on to ask from our Saviour what is the second need that He sees in us, what is the second cure, and what the price paid down for it. After pardon, what then? After guilt; is all well when guilt is done away? No, there remains pain, suffering, death. The poor thief was pardoned, was reconciled; but he was not taken down from his cross. The cruel pain still clutched him, creeping closer and closer to the seat of life, the deadly weight of his sin-stained body still wrenched him on the tree. He had to bear all the evil, he had to go further even than the Saviour of the world, he had to bear that last strain which God refused to let Jesus inherit, because a bone of him might not be broken. But the thief's limbs were broken by the cruel bar of the spear. He had to go through all the long agony, the interminable history as it must have seemed, of a slow dying, after his pardon. And so, after guilt is shaken off, after God becomes our friend, after justice has no terrors for us—because we are in Christ Jesus, walking not according to the flesh but according to the spirit—there remains the passion, there remains the Cross, the sorrow, the trial, the long, long pain. And what does Jesus give us for its cure, for its support, to enable us to sustain it? What is His cup of water to maintain the re-

conciled sinner through his long crucifixion of the flesh? He gives us the true cure, the grace of patience; and for the source of patience He gives us hope. Remember that. Patience is the cure for pain; not escape, but the power to bear. And the medicine for anguish, the food of patience is always hope; not mere manly cries, not the shout of encouragement of the military chief like Frederick the Great, who calls upon his men to charge, scorning and mocking them as they hang back, asking them if they mean to live for ever; not the mere brusquerie of comradeship, but the sweet medicine of reward, of hope. The promise, that is the Saviour's pledge to build up patience, that is His way of ministering to pain. He gives us the promise as to the penitent thief, of the Paradise that we need. Cast it not away from you, that promise. Think not in your modern manliness to do without the old stories of the heavenly reward, of the golden city, of the rest in Paradise with Jesus. Think not that we can be more courageous than the Saviour, more manly than God's rule, but understand that He has given us the thought and memory of Heaven to be the standing bulwark of patience, to enable us day by day, hour by hour, to endure that which He would have us to endure. And consider how much wiser we

should be if we still loved to think about, to rejoice, as they scorn us for rejoicing, in this thought of Heaven, rather than to find the medicine of our grief in worldly distraction; in the invention of fleshly delight, in the selfishness of earthly money-getting and money-spending upon ourselves. How much better to bear the Cross, enduring the shame, as Jesus was not too great to bear it; because of the hope set before Him, He endured the Cross, despising the shame. By the prospect of Paradise, by the promise of the garden, by the word of sweet companionship with Himself in secure rest, He made the poor thief able to bear his torture, his grief, his death. He held him up by promises, by hope, by tender sympathy, so teaching us how we must encourage one another, how we, as we look upon the poor, and upon the suffering, must build them up through hope, through promise, by speaking of the heavenly place, by leading them to where Jesus Christ already wipes away all tears from our eyes. He teaches us to accept this as the means of our own endurance, that we, not thinking any of God's gifts unnecessary, taking that which He offers, may do that which He expects, may bear the pain which He puts upon us, now that we are pardoned, not before; because while we are in guilt we cannot bear the Cross,

but when we are pardoned He bestows upon us the community of His sufferings.

In your thoughts just now upon your knees pray for all poor men who are reaping the earthly consequences of their faults. Some of you perhaps belong to a Society which we know of, in which we pray for the poor men who are about to suffer the penalty of death for crimes against life. Pray for such as those to-day. Beg for them a complete pardon. Remember what we said of hope accompanying the sinner all along his life. Just because the sinner is himself, just because the book of God is here in the breast, therefore God can wipe out the evil record. Pray for them; let that be your first thought. And then, secondly, accept from Jesus His privilege of pain. Say to Him, "Now that I am pardoned, now I have peace, put upon me the Cross, give me my share of the world's great pain; let me know the suffering of the poor, of the weary, of the solitary. Let me take my own share bravely." Thirdly, acknowledge, recognize, accept, that which is Christ's cure for grief, that which is Christ's food for patience, the food of hope, the prospect of the heavenly home. Say to Him now, "Jesus, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom." Say to Him, those of you who are in grief, those of you who have sickness,

who have anxiety, who have solitude, who are old, who are alone; say to Him, "Lord, we suffer; but we indeed justly, for we receive only the due reward of our deeds; but Thou Who hast done nothing amiss, remember us when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom," and He will give you to-day the promise and almost its fulfilment; you shall be already "saved in hope." He will give you to walk with Him to-day in peace in the Paradise which He has opened for you through His Blood.

THE THIRD WORD

BEHOLD THY SON ! BEHOLD THY MOTHER

“ When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple standing by, whom He loved, He saith unto His mother, Woman, behold thy son ! Then saith He to the disciple, Behold thy mother.”—ST. JOHN xix. 26, 27.

LIFT your hearts once again, my brethren, to Jesus Christ in Heaven, and say to Him “ Lord, show us, show me, what is my next need ; what is the next evil Thou wouldest cure in me as I come forward in the life of salvation.” And He makes answer thus : “ Look, my Son, to My Cross ; hear what I said and did there ; I teach thee in Myself what is thy need, paying for thee piece by piece all the price of thy salvation.” And so we read, “ There stood by the Cross of Jesus, His mother and His mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple standing by whom He loved, He saith unto His mother, Woman, behold thy son. Then saith He to the disciple, Behold thy

mother. And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home."

There the Lord teaches us what is the third part of our need ; what the evil is, what the cure and what the price. What does the sinner need when he has made the first step of penitence, when he has confessed his sin, when he has set himself to turn away from evil habits, when he is bearing manfully his penance, when he knows what it is to work out the painful consequences of a wasted life—what does he want then ? Do you know—or have you never known it because you have never lacked that precious thing—a home ? That is what the sinner needs, that is what the penitent cries out for. This we know who have lived as clergymen in the thickly-populated parts of our City, who have seen dear fellows come out from the herded life of the great lodging-houses, where there are good men and bad as in other places, but which are in themselves a kind of symbol of a wretched lonely life in a crowd. We know what they want. In my old home down in Southwark there were night after night something like a thousand single men sleeping within a stone's throw from my own bed—eight hundred men on the left-hand side, nearly a hundred across the road, fifty or sixty down below my window in the next

houses to our own. We know what that lonely life is—of the wandering man who has no wife or children or who has lost them by his fault or theirs. And we know what happens when such a one—I am not speaking as if all were bad or were more bad than any other class of men—we know what the cry is when one of these comes to church, confesses his sins, shows his wounds, gets absolution, begins to be regular in his attendance, longs to be good, bears his suffering. For indeed he has much to bear, a bad character to fight against, scoffs from those who knew him of old, frowns from the respectable tradesmen who will not risk to engage him. All this he bears, perhaps in bodily sickness, on scanty food, and in pain. When he has made his first two stages, when he has shown his conscience, when he has shouldered his cross, what is his next cry? What does he say to his clergyman?—he says “Father, you must get me a home—I must have some place which shall be more or less my own. I cannot go on living in this barrack way with no ground for myself beyond the limit of my bed, where I cannot so much as leave my coat during the day, but must carry everything about with me wherever I go. There must be a home. Give me a sense of belonging to somebody. Get me”—this is the word in nine cases out of ten—“get

me into a family. Persuade one of the people, one of the married folk, to make me a lodger. Let me have a door to knock at when I come home late; let there be a voice to scold me when I come back wrong." He wants above all other things a home—a reconstruction of the old feeling, the old atmosphere. If he could but get back his mother, his father, his wife, who perhaps has barred the door against him. That is his need—a home. And that quite strictly and always and according to the essential order of spiritual need, is what every one of us wants as we advance in the life of restoration. Jesus knew this, as He knew all things. He read our hearts there from the Cross. He knew that for ever to the end of time this would be the sinner's, the penitent's need. And so He bestowed upon us in the third place the cure of solitude; and He paid the price, He paid down the price of His mother's companionship. He elected to die alone, untended, without one eye to watch his latest breath. He chose to die without one face upon which His gaze might rest, in order thus to pay down the price for the essential need of every sinner, to give to every sinner a home, a brother, a mother. See how piece by piece He pays down the very price. It is, as we said during the week, not only a ransom—a sum of money paid for the con-

demned—but life for life, soul for soul, His peace given for our peace, His honour given for our restoration, His pain paid down that we might have hope. That He might save others He refused to save Himself. He shuts off the hope of coming down from the Cross that He may with authority speak to the thief of the Paradise to come. And so, that He may with authority give us the home we need, He pays down the price of His own home, He gives His own mother, the unspeakably dear, unspeakably worthy of affection. The mother who is incomparable—for her Son need not, cannot come into any comparison—she who stands up above the sons of men, the chosen maiden of the Lord, the mother of Our Lord and God Jesus Christ, the shrine of Godhead, the fountain enclosed, the garden of God's election—she is given up by Him who loved her unspeakably, Whom she with the perfect fulfilment of a creature's love cherished and held in a mother's heart. Through her heart also must go the sword. Think it not a phrase, or a fancy. She was a real mother with a real mother's love. You who are mothers yourselves, think how it is with you when the strong son comes back from over seas to die ; when you find him again in his narrow lodging or in the hospital bed, and see his great muscular frame shaken through the disease of his

chest; and by the rasping breathing know that he is passing from you, and know that he knows. Think of it you who are in the way to see this sight—the clergyman, the doctor, the friend—who see the little woman by the bedside, and it seems hardly credible that she nursed on her breast the giant who draws his labouring breath. Think of that pain, that cross, that sword through the heart. And then think of Mary the mother of the Lord, and how He turned from her, how He relinquished her, how He bade her go home, how He parted with her comfort. He was lifted up above her; she could not reach that hard bed upon which He lay, she could not minister to His thirst, she had no reed to lift the sponge upon. But He parted even with the sight of the eyes which overflowed with love of Him; He gave away His Home that He might be wholly poor, and that by paying down this price—this price of domestic love, this treasure of a mother's companionship—He might win for ever for all sinners that which they essentially need, the companionship, the home, the love of a mother. So He gave away His mother, He gave away His beloved disciple. He gave them to each other, thus creating a home even as He sacrificed His home, and re-creating our homes by His homelessness upon the Cross. That

is our third grief, that is our third wound ; homelessness, solitude. That is His third cure ; a home for all, a family. He is God “ Who setteth the solitary in families, Who maketh men to be of one mind in a house,” “ Who maketh Himself households like a flock of sheep,” devising “ means that His banished be not expelled from Him.”

We may not to-day dwell upon all this, lest we encroach upon your time of prayer. Think of the home which He has given you, in the order of nature. Think how precious it is ; think how it is the very thing you need. Think how Jesus loved it—loves it now. Think how He restores you that love which in the course of nature passes away. He has loved us in our families ; He loves our fathers, our mothers. And as a true friend makes a kind of exchange and would have us know his mother as he knows ours, so Jesus, the Friend of sinners, invites us to love Mary. He says, “ I have loved your mothers that bore you. Do not you care for Mine who bore Me?” We must love His mother as He has so well loved ours. And she becomes in a way our own also, for we are in Him. He is ours and we are His, and with Him we take this love of His dear mother, whose pain He endured to see upon the Cross, whose turning away in so much grief was perhaps the sharpest grief to

Him. He invites us to this love. And to all those who in the course of nature or in other ways have passed away from home life, he offers the supernatural home; to all He offers the great house of God the Father—the Church which is God's habitation. There we are all to be at home. Think not then of this word Church as being a hard word of discipline—of organization. Think of the Church as being the home of love—the loving congregation of brothers round the feet of the Father through the merit of Jesus, breathed upon like some garden of flowers by the gale of the Holy Ghost. Ah! that is a great thing that we need. That is a great gain for us when we come to see the Church as it is, when we know and understand that no hard uniformity, no historical pride satisfies the true account, the true meaning of the Church; when it comes to be to us a garden of flowers where a fountain is in the midst, even Jesus—"the fountain of gardens, the well of living waters and streams from Lebanon"; when it comes to be the Father's Home, and every one in it is a dear brother, and every woman in it is sacred for Mary's sake—for Jesus' sake; when we cease to strive one against another, when we pray God to forgive us for our selfishness, when we seek to bestow ourselves one upon the other in brotherly love.

And even on such a day as this I cannot refrain from saying one further word for peace. As we come for the peace that we need, as we come round that Table, which is the Supper Table of our heavenly home, as we come to eat the Bread of Life, Jesus Christ, see that there is pity, see that there is compassion, considerateness, "tarrying one for the other." Here is the true ritual of the Altar. No recovery of ancient symbols, of Catholic ceremonial, will make the Sanctuary anything but poor and bare and mean while there is one soul hindered, one soul offended, one man needlessly kept away from the Table of the Lord. Think of that. That is what the Lord desires to see—His Holy Table surrounded by sympathy, courtesy, gentleness, brotherly love, mutual compassion, the cloud of the incense of happy prayer. That is what He requires—the ceremonial of an unfailing courtesy, the richness of a family drawn together round His feet; the true antiquity, the true catholic dignity, of the poor coming where the poor man's friend waits for them. Let us not be content while this holy mystery has around it anything which offends, anything which checks, anything which perplexes. And since there is no other conceivable means by which everybody may be happy, everybody contented, everybody find the form and frame of

worship which suits his soul, therefore let there be diversity. Remember this when you emerge from the warm feelings, from the hearty prayers of Holy Week. Do not return to the old fight for a mechanical regularity, for a heartless uniformity; but remember that what Jesus desires to see is contented hearts round about Him. (Let those, therefore, who can love and use the ancient Catholic ceremonial of the Church, be content—as I think they are fully content—that others should still retain the barer worship of our childhood; and let those on the other hand who are offended and checked by things which are practically new although they are historically ancient, let them not grudge a different way to those who are differently moved. And let us all believe that peace is what we want; not uniformity in outward things, but the true harmony of contented hearts; that since one church and one altar cannot possibly in the nature of things present exactly the aspect which all Christians would like to see, but every form must needs offend in some sense some; therefore in the great mansion of God's Church let there be many chambers of approach to the one Bread, that in the midst of a certain diversity of mode we may draw together without check, without alarm, without shame, without debate, with mutual

courtesy, tarrying one for the other, in unbroken pity, to Jesus Christ Who is our Peace. Think not that this is too low a thing to have spoken of to-day. Keep it in your prayers. You will be called upon to return presently to the old debates. Refuse them. By the Passion of Jesus, by the mercies of God—I speak to you in God's Name, and you shall hardly be guiltless if you refuse to hear—if there be any consolation in Christ, any love of the Spirit, I call upon you to avoid all those debates which bring the indignity of discord within sight, within hearing, within thought of the sacred mystery of God's home and the spread table of God's family, into which may He grant to us sinners full entrance for our souls' salvation.)

In your silence pray God that you may know your homelessness; pray God to grant you the incoming to His home; pray God to make you, with Mary and all Saints, loyal fellow-brothers and sisters in the great family of Grace.

THE FOURTH WORD

ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI ?

“And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”—ST. MATT. xxvii. 46.

THIS is the moment, dear brothers, in the great lesson from the Cross at which we have specially to beg the grace of a renewed resolution of attention. Let us be swift to hear, to receive the engrafted word which is able to save our souls. Even as you have persevered so patiently in your action of devotion in this sacred place, so maintain and renew with ever fresh courage your desire to ascend to Christ in Heaven, to learn from Him the secret of His sorrow and His peace. Ask of Him yet once again, “What do I need now, O Christ?” Learn the need by this wonder of the word in the darkness. There fell a supernatural darkness over the land from the sixth to the ninth hour; and about the ninth hour, towards the end of His Passion, almost at the very end,

Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, "Eloi, Eloi, Lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"—crying out in a voice which those who heard it did not understand because they were not used to the sacred language of the scriptures; crying out in a voice which we still cannot and dare not understand; expressing some of the mystery of a holy desolation in His creaturely nature, bearing witness to a darkness which was due not to Him, but to us—the darkness of the separation from the sight of God's Face which He knew while He dwelt unchanged in the light which no man can approach unto. For in that light He was all through His Passion, yet nevertheless the darkness fell upon the soul of Jesus Christ according to the mystery of His sacred humanity. That voice, whose meaning regarding Him we hardly dare to search after, may well be studied by our low method. For we can ask with regard to it with a good courage and with perfect security: What is its message for the sinner's need; what does it tell us of the evil that is in us; what is the feature of our poverty which God will next cure—what is the cure and what is the price that is paid for the cure?

The sinner begins with penitence, and he must make every part of his journey with penitence unto the end of the way. The need

of penitence comes first, not in such sense as to pass away as if its work were done, but so as to be the continual foundation upon which every day of spiritual life must be built up. Penitence never passes away. The Church we are brought into is a body of mercy—"Mercy embraceth us on every side." We are there among the redeemed, among the forgiven, always as men ransomed; and in Heaven those who stand clothed in the white raiment of an accomplished righteousness, bear witness that they washed their robes from stains in the Blood of Jesus; and the song they sing is the song of Moses and of the Lamb, the song of the Red Sea and of the Precious Blood, the song of deliverance from slavery, of redemption from sin and condemnation. Nay, the very object of their worship is revealed in such wise as ever to maintain the sense of mercy and of a sacrifice. He stands as if a lamb late slain upon the altar in the midst of the Throne, He that liveth and was dead; and the secure joy with which they adore Him is a joy of penitence transfigured into praise. So the first necessity, and the constant necessity of the life of grace is penitence. And the second is akin to it; it is a constant hope in constant patience, a glad submission under pain until the Kingdom comes; and then thirdly, is the need and gift of Home. And can there be

anything wanted more than this—anything to be coveted by those who are brought into the Home and are no more strangers and pilgrims, but fellow-citizens with the Saints and belong to the household, the family of God?

Yes, there is something more. There is such a thing as being in the Palace and not knowing the King. There is such a thing as being safe in a certain sense in the family and not knowing the Father by face; knowing Him perhaps by name, remembering Him sometimes, but not dwelling in the light of His countenance. And so I said well, now is the time to persevere, for this is the evil, not of the world, but of the Church. This is the sadness not of the reprobate, but of the penitent. This is the penury not of the unbeliever, but of the Catholic. ^{He is in the Church, he} He is in the Church, he enjoys the sacraments, but he has not sought to press through beyond the veil. He receives the precious gifts of God as if in costly caskets, but he has not broken the vase that the fragrance might fill the whole house. He dwells under the protection of the Saviour's name, but he cannot tell from his experience that Christ is in him of a truth. And yet he is not reprobate. The words have a meaning, though they have no thrill for him, which say "We are come unto Mount Sion." He lives with his face averted. His heart is locked up

from prayer. At the best there are words, there are memories of Christ, of God the Father; at best there is a belief in the Holy Ghost as a kind of third consequence in the Creed, which we believe in because we believe in the Father and the Son; as a Somewhat on the far outward confines of our territory of faith instead of a Presence which is the continual inward treasure of our consciousness, the earnest of our inheritance, the prize in hand, the light we know already, the *witness* to the things as yet unseen. God's presence, God's love, God's face, the power of the Holy Ghost, the aspect of Jesus, the fellowship of the Father's love—these were not meant to be subjects for our conjecture; they were meant to be the grounds of our conviction, to be that which we allege in support of faith and hope, not that which we faintly endeavour to infer as the result of a logical speculation. What is the meaning of the weakness of Christian evidences? What is the meaning of Christians being shaken in faith? Do you not know Him, the Father? "Ye have an unction of the Holy One and ye know all things." "Do ye not recognize about yourselves," asks St. Paul, "is not this the fruit of your daily self-inspection, that Christ is in you of a truth, except ye be reprobate?" "Christ in you, the hope of glory," is He

unvisited? Does He live within your heart unknown? Your Father in Heaven—can you not go into His Presence? Do you not know what it is to lie speechless before Him in prayer, so near to Him that there can be no address, because your heart is in His Heart, even as the beloved disciple laid his head upon the breast of God Incarnate? We are not only to be in the privileged body, inheritors of the Kingdom, having the *entrée* to the Court, but we are to be of those who know the Father, the King, the Eternal, the unspeakable beauty, who are filled as with new wine with the joy of His Presence. We should not fear criticism then, we should not fear unbelief; our persuasion, our apologetic would not take the form it sometimes takes, of an almost despairing effort to find some other man to keep us in countenance while we are Christians; to win some one, great or small, to bear us out in the faith of Jesus Christ. No, we should know Him and the power of His resurrection, if we were made conformable to His death. That is the need. If you know it not, if it does not sound to you like a need, does that mean that you have it like the home? No, it means that you do not know how near God can be, how familiar the Father is, how God, as Dame Julian of Norwich says, “Willeth to be known;” it means, you do not know what is

the glory of the liberty of the children of God, and what the protecting tenderness of their Father, the Father of our Lord Jesus, Who in Him blesses them with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places. And indeed it is far far better for us to feel desolate, to feel solitary, to feel in the dark. If we are not conscious of God's Presence, it is good at least to be conscious of His absence, though in fact He is not far from any one of us. And all those who know Him well, so greatly desire to know Him better that they are ready to cry out, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" It was because of His nearness that Jesus so cried; it was because of His knowledge, that the darkness was a darkness to His illuminated eye; and if we are in Him and living by Him we shall not think we have attained; but just because we are being pressed closer and closer to the Father's heart, we shall cry out, "How long, O Lord—how long before Thy love comes home, how long before the heart is yielded, how long before I know and see?" "We should better find God," says one of the old Puritans,¹ "we should sooner find God to be our Father if we were more orphaned in our spirit—He is the Father of the fatherless, and the God of the widow,

¹ Sibbes (in effect). The words which follow are not a quotation.

and it is the soul that knows its widowhood that finds the husbandhood of God ; it is the heart that feels fatherless which has Him for a Father." That is what the sinner needs—he cannot be safe without that. This is no privilege of rapture for one Saint in a thousand ; this is no marvel for a Saint Teresa ; for a Saint John of the Cross. It is the essence of the forgiven life ; it is the necessary consequence of a true penitence ; it is what we must all press on to, to know Him Whom we have believed in, seeking after Jesus Christ beyond the sky, and in Him finding the fulness of the Father's glory. To follow on to know the Lord—that is the prize He bestows upon the sinner. First pardon, and then patience ; and then a home so rich, full of all the supplies of grace ; and then there breathes through the corridors of the house an inviting voice, and those who know declare the voice of the Father Who comes home although he never departs ; Who makes Himself heard although He was never silent ; Who invites although He has led us by the hand ; Who would have us listen, lend our ears, come to Him. Be silent, yield the heart, that here in this life we may know Him the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. It was to gain this that Christ died ; not that we might be superficially washed only ; not that we might be pardoned and then left alone ; not that we

might be gathered together and kept safe as in a caravan, as in an ark; but that we might be drawn up into the Father's heart. This is perfection, this is goodness, this is pardon. If we stop short of this we are not cleansed. Even as cleansing means union—"Except I wash you ye have no part in me"—so union means pardon; unless we are in union, the pardon halts and is not certain. We are cleansed that we may pass the threshold; we pass the threshold that we may be clothed upon with the marriage garment; we have the marriage garment in order that we may go in to the wedding supper of the Lamb—a feast which is a feast of marriage, a feast of union; and the love of Jesus Christ is not satisfied with being the love of a King who pardons, of a Lord who pays the price, of a friend who risks, who lays down, his life; it is only satisfied when it becomes the love of the bridegroom for the bride, when it avails to compel union, to yield all His life for us, to win our life to God, Who so loves us that He gave, and yet gives, His only-begotten Son. The exaltation of the humble heart into the eternal bliss of God Who waits for us—that is what the sinner next needs; the joy of communion, of contemplation, of knowing Him Whom he hath believed, of tasting the sweetness of that Bread which he receives sacramentally at the Altar, of recognizing in his heart the cry of

the Spirit of adoption, the adoption in which he was constituted by the life-giving sacrament of baptism. To know God Who has known us, "to press on that I may apprehend, seeing that also I was apprehended by Jesus Christ," this is our prize, this is our need, nothing less than this will save us. And see how great a price Jesus paid for it. He paid down the price of His own mysterious desolation. Even as to give us our home on earth, His Catholic Church, He paid down the price of His mother's tears, He watched the sword go through her own heart also; even so, to give us the joy of the Father's face He paid down in a mystery we cannot fathom the price of His own darkness, of His own desolation. He hung there solitary that we might come home. He made Himself a stranger and forsaken that we, who were strangers and alienated from the life of God, might be brought in and made partakers of that Eternal Rest from which Jesus Christ sprang forth towards us, in order that completing His glorious circuit of life He might sweep us on the stream of His answering love of God into that Heart of the Father, which is His home eternally, and which He makes to be ours. He has made us free of the Home, of the Heart, of the Face of God. "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed"—made sons, partakers, entering

into the knowledge of the Father. Ah! it is this holy knowledge we must long for, if the Saviour is to see in us the travail of His Soul.

Pray then to God now, in this hour, to give you the knowledge of your desolation; pray God to give you, it may be even now, those who have not yet known it, the wondrous entrance into His—I almost dare to say—unveiled presence. “Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near.” Pray to Him that you may never waste that price of your home-coming which was His desolation, but entering under the shadow of His prayer, “My God, My God,” may have your solitude cured, to the glory of God the Father. And those who have known, those who have lost, or deem they have lost, that Presence—must they despair? Believe it, the darkness they walk in is the very road to the clearer light, for it is the way of the companionship of Jesus. “Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His Servant, that walketh in darkness and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord,” Who is called Saviour; “let him stay upon his God,” Who is Emmanuel, God with us, and Who not only heals us by His stripes, but, by the merits of His desolation, “receives us unto the Glory of God.”

THE FIFTH WORD

I THIRST

“After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.”—ST. JOHN XIX. 28.

WE must still keep on our low level, by our low method, asking yet once again what need in us the Saviour reveals by His word. Well indeed if by His grace we can know it and receive its cure. We shall then indeed be celebrating His Passion although after a low fashion, yet in a way fit for us and really bringing Him honour. What then does the sinner come to know within himself, if by God's mercy he does attain to some communion with God, some experience of those heavenly realities into which he is knit up by his membership in the Church? Can there be anything more for him? In one sense all is done, even as of our Lord it is said that He knew “that all things were now accomplished.” The man has, in the centre of his life, reached the goal, which is God. But the great work is

being done on the stage of a creaturely life, and in a world of change and time ; and goes in advance of the perfect practical conquest of the man's mind and flesh. He enters by faith into the glory of God, but there yet remains the work of conforming all the being and all the circumstances to God. And so in your experience you will recognize that there is something which seems an anti-climax—a great disappointment. We come out of darkness into light, we repent, we give ourselves to the Church, we live as good Christians, as good Catholics, we frequent the Sacraments ; and then we are drawn on further to the life of prayer, and that which had been to us only a thought becomes a golden key to open up our very hearts to the heavenly glory ; and we think that now surely all is accomplished. Now, cries the forgiven soul, now let me die ; I shall be no better. But then God, having thus given us the rudiments of Faith—for that heavenly vision is only the normal state of a Christian recovered after so long a lapse—now begins to use us. Having drilled His soldier He takes him from the parade-ground ; He leads him forth to battle ; He throws him again among men. There is a pause in the sweet flood of sensible devotion ; the tears flow no longer ; the man comes back again as it were to this lower world ; he has to work out his salvation with

fear and trembling, and in the discipline of ordinary experience. He has his place in the organization of life, in the world, in the state; he returns, in a sense, from the heavenly vision, not disobedient. Yet he goes back as Paul went back, to the long roads, to the troublesome people, to the wearisome apostolate, to the journeys, so eventful and so undistinguished. And the shipwrecks and the trials, and the lodging in Rome—all the common incidents of a prosaic discipline—come to him after he has been lifted up, “Whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell,” into the third Heaven, where he has heard unspeakable words, and known something of “a crown laid up.” And in the converted man to-day it is the same, in measure; and he needs a warning and an encouragement when he drops from his rapture, from his prayer, from his delight, from his unbroken rest, and finds himself again hurried from point to point, attending in the police-courts, paying his way, governing his parish, working out his business. He has to be assured that this lies all in the track. By this as by some hammering God secures the great gift. He warmed you to red-heat in the fire of His love, and now He puts you on the anvil of His providence, that by the blows of His discipline He may shape you according to the model of His expectations. Now you find

the hammering of a smithy, into which the irons are flung in crowds, for shaping and reshaping, and it is precisely this which is salvation, though it appears in an order so unexpected. It is here in the ordinary perplexities of life—the things to take, and the things to leave aside, the feasting and the fast, and the more difficult interior mortification of eating when other men can fast. It is the level common-sense life of health and weakness; of home, and care and anxiety; the prosaic life of the married clergyman who comes down from the vision of a strange and separate perfection, to find himself as other men; it is this which is the appointed discipline by which God beats home the precious pattern of His design upon the metal which He heated high in the flame of rapture and generous desire. And so in our Lord there was this after the climax of suffering. After the darkness and eclipse, after that pinnacle of pain which no man can search into, comes this common want—the common want of thirst. The discipline of the Cross in its acutest torture was designed by man; but this was only such a thing as accompanies all work, that which belongs to the Cross, not as a passion but as a labour—that which comes to all men in the course of the hours, but which comes in torrents of power in such pain as His. Yet it was a

common want, a common pain ; lifted up into the extreme of urgency by the extremity of His pain—but still a common want. And, mark you, a want which He allows to be ministered unto, which He allows to be relieved. When they brought to Him before His Passion the mingled drink of wine and myrrh, which was meant to soften His pain, which was, we are sometimes told, ministered by some guild of pious women to all condemned sufferers that it might deaden the terrible torture of the execution—when this came He rejected it. He would have nothing unnecessary, nothing to obscure the full agony of His pain. He would taste death for every man by the grace of God and by nothing else. He, by the grace of God, lifted up by the power of God, would taste death for every man. But now in this common want, in this thirst which He shares with the animals as they drag their loads, at last He allows Himself to be ministered to. And He teaches thereby that most penetrating kind of mortification, the inward mortification in which we acknowledge our common needs and accept their common remedy. He accepted the drink because He was thirsty. He tasted of it, according to the scriptures ; but also according to the truth of His Humanity. Think how beautiful it is that after all upon the Cross, at last, He stooped low enough to find our pity

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where it lay hid. We cared not for Him because He was our God ; we blasphemed Him and smote Him on the mouth. He came in His title of Prophet, and the cry was, "Thou art a liar, and possessed of a devil." He came with the proclamation, "Behold your King," and we cried, "Away with Him, away with Him ; we will not have this Man to rule over us !" He came to us as our brother, our fellow-creature ; and we heaped upon Him indignity, we smote Him, and spat upon Him, and scourged Him, we put Him outside the pale of our common humanity. But, when at last He cries out, in a voice which might be the voice of the beasts that perish, when He owns a want which He shares with the poor creatures of burden, man's pity is at last found out. There low down it lurks. Even so now you may see it. The men who care not for God, the men who do not take pity upon Jesus Christ, the men who ruin women's souls, the men who neglect their own little children—see them in a crowd in their drink, in their carelessness, by the street side, when they have no thought but of some pleasure, some bet or loud gaiety ; see them if a child stands in danger as a van swings past the corner. From the crowd of careless sinners, of rough and reckless men and women, there will come the cry of pity, of alarm ; they spring to save ;

they cannot bear that pain ; they will save the poor child's limbs. And though men seem like hardened steel, yet the sight of suffering will touch us all. The rough man is sorry for his horse ; he puts his horse out of misery ; cannot bear to see the poor thing wounded and in despair. That is a great blessing to think of ; that there is a soft place left in our hearts. God pursues us down and down, and although we reject Him once and again, and build up barriers round our feelings, yet He makes His way in by the rudimentary appeal of common pain, common woes that we still feel ; there is still a slender thread by which God may disentangle the dark maze of our wilfulness, and find His way into our poor souls. Be glad, then, that on the Cross, even He Who was rejected of men, Who was led as a lamb to the slaughter, found among His butchers pity ; found one to lift up the sponge moistened in the sour wine left for the executioners' refreshment, dipped out of their common stock. They did not grudge Him a drink of their wine when He cried, "I thirst!" There was one ready, according to prophecy, to give Him that. There then is that great blessing ; and in this we see the Lord's great condescension, that He is willing to receive something so much less than our best. If He cannot have our faith, our love, He will accept our money, our generosity. From the

adulterer, from the robber, from the thief, from the man of pleasure, He will still accept alms. He is satisfied—no, He is not satisfied, but He will not reject it as we should. The clergyman, however broad in mind, however full of love, can hardly bear to take it; can hardly bear to think that God's work is kept up, for example, as I knew a good work kept up once, by the alms of a betting man. We can hardly bear to take such help, but Jesus will take it. If you are not sorry for yourselves, He is glad you are sorry for your children. If you will not cease from selling the poison which brings men to death, He will accept—and He will use—the alms with which you try to make up feebly for the wrong you do. He does not reject it as we should be tempted to reject it. And if you withhold your money, if you will not give yourselves, yet if you are but sorry for your wife at home, if you care for the child you see in pain, if you stop for the horse who groans in its galloping, Jesus accepts that love; He is glad of anything that is a beginning. Keep the heart soft, keep that place open. But remember, that for every work of pity undone, the heart becomes harder; and with every work of pity done, the heart becomes a little softer; and if you persevere to do the thing, it will bring you—you know it will not save or cleanse you—but somehow it will bring

you, yes, to have pity upon yourselves, to have a soft heart into which the grace of Christ can enter like a healing wine. Christ will take anything—anything rather than nothing; anything rather than it should be said at the last day that we had paid nothing into the treasury, where everything is preserved, and small things become great. At the last day He would fain have something of yours to show, that He may say to the Father, “Behold, they gave Me a cup of cold water. Inasmuch as they did it unto the least of these my brethen, they did it unto Me.” And the soul which has had pity upon the weak shall scarcely be lost. When they are done truly in Christ’s name, such works of mercy win the reward which is due to Christ—eternal life.

But to return; for our poor souls we need our fulfilment of the mystery of Christ’s thirst. We must not be surprised that after our joy, after happy experiences of faith, we come back to the drudgery of common life, come back to the thirst, and come back to its satisfaction. We must have this kind of discipline, this kind of mortification, if we are to go on to that of which I hope just now to speak. We pursue the true track, and we are one with the Saviour only as we accept that discipline. Let us, day by day, seek to renew our knowledge of God’s face—seek to renew our brotherly

community in the Church—seek to renew our patient bearing of pain—seek first of all and always to renew our peace with God, by pleading freshly, day by day, the availing merits of our Saviour's Passion; and on this foundation let us receive the weight of discipline as the prepared course upon which the building of a Christian life may rest.

THE SIXTH WORD

IT IS FINISHED

“When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished.”—ST. JOHN xix. 30.

It was God's Will that was finished. It was that which He accepted in His Human Nature, as His meat and drink, to do the Father's Will. This Will of the Father was now finished, and Jesus Christ was content. And from this we learn what it is that as penitents we still need. We have spoken as if we went on steadily from point to point. There will be many difficulties, backslidings, failings, the enemy of souls bringing harder and harder trials to bear upon us just in proportion as we are really making spiritual progress. And so time after time we must be content to begin again at the beginning, knowing that we have no hope but hope for pardon in our guilt; that we are sinners condemned, and ask for no privilege, no spiritual accomplishments, but only that God may for Christ's sake once

again forgive us our sins. Yet in spite of all our badness, as we go on in Him continually renewed in pardon, there will be a progress, and there is a point when we shall come to need just the special lesson of this word. The mind has escaped from a state of wretchedness and wilful enmity to God, to pass to a laborious bearing of pain, to a real fellowship in the Church, to a holy knowledge of God, to a willing bearing of all the different burdens which God uses for the working out of His plan. After all this a man may come to be able to grasp one simple thought, to desire God's will *because it is God's will*. That is by no means a state which comes without saying, which comes without a trial. We first of all desire cleanliness because it is clean, and are glad that there is God to give us the cleanliness which we choose. And then we advance so as to desire work of various kinds; work for the heathen, for the poor. We are on fire for some special enterprise, some chosen object. It is not till later for the most part that men have grace to accept the Will of God because it is the Will of God, not knowing what that Will may be. But as the Spirit of Jesus conquers in them; as out of the root of a heart bound up into His Heart by the cord of love there flow out streams of healing for the mind and conscience; gradually more

and more the man is content to accept opportunities of service which his own impulse would never have chosen. He desires no longer what is easiest, he desires no longer even what is hard. He will not go where sacrifice might be splendid or where service seems most needed. He desires only God's Will—what it is, as it is, not knowing what it is. That is His meat and drink, to be doing what God wishes, even if it seems like rest. That is a great advance. It is much further advanced than the state of the man who is ever ready to throw himself into the breach, who is ever ready for the forlorn hope. This is the spirit of God's servant, willing to receive honour or dishonour, able to be full as well as able to be empty, able to bear praise as well as able to bear blame; doing all things through Christ that strengtheneth him; doing all things in the Spirit of Christ, because they are the Father's Will. Pray we for that. That is the security of the penitent life—to be able to accept the Father's will for what it is. Too often it is to us dark and hard and severe; we dread to touch it; it seems to us unknown and obscure so that we fear to commit ourselves to it. But remember, we know what it is, we know where it ends. We have the two-fold revelation of its character. It is our sanctification and it is His glory. And while

we know it by report, being told that His Will is our sanctification, we know it also by inspection in Jesus Christ. There, in the Man who *did* God's will, we know what God's will is. Is it a thing to shrink from? Perfect love, perfect sacrifice, perfect brotherhood, perfect generosity, perfect communion with the Father. We know the outlet of that stream. We know how it debouches into the ocean of heavenly love. Therefore we ought not to fear the dark channels of its higher fountains. It is as we cross it like one of those dark rock-hewn passages for water which you may see filled from the highland lakes, where the river runs black between the perpendicular sides of crowding mountains. So the Will appears to us; dark, unfathomable, forbidding, cold, leading we know not where. But cast the mind ahead; cast the eye of faith in front; see where it becomes the river of water of life, broad rivers of water by the golden city of peace, where is the home of God's love, the perfection of sacrifice—the joy of an accomplished service. And take the Will now as you find it though it leads you through dark places, through dull routine, through unwelcome effort, through times of invalidship, through home life when you would gladly be with the heathen, through society when you would gladly be with the poor. Take it as it comes;

it will lead out into broader passages. It is ours only to grasp steadily the clue. Seize hold of the love of God, which is His Will. Only seize hold of the Will of God in Jesus Christ, and the path you tread will lead out into broad ways of abundance, into plenteous accomplishments of sacrifice, into perfect burning up of self, into vigorous life within the Heart of God. That must be the clinching of your penitence—I choose God's Will *because it is His Will*. There can be therefore no complaint, no discontent, no weariness. I have only to hold myself together and He will take me as I am with that which is good in me by His gift, and with that which is bad in me by my own fault; and he will take it all that He may burn the bad in the fire and put the good in His garner. All is His, and I have only this to learn, that the world is His. The path I tread is now sanctified, not because it has been changed outwardly, but because I who tread along it am offered. Now all the ways of life are the paths which God has created for me to walk in, and all the tasks of the week are the good works which He hath prepared for me to do. If only the life, the future, be in Jesus Christ offered to God, then we may go forward in a perfect contentment, and each thing and each person we meet is the person God sends us, the thing God would have us do. His will is enough for us;

so that we tread forward in joy knowing clearly only our higher aims; not fretful because there seems no splendour of sacrifice in our lives. And as we thus walk along what seems the prosaic path, if only we walk in the spirit of those who have been offered, we may say at the end—"It is finished. I have finished the work that Thou gavest me to do, for I have finished that which came, and I believe that Thou leddest me to it; Thou didst give it me to do. Only make me Thine own and all the circumstances are Thy task. And if I but tread through them by Thy grace, I may say, Thou hast given me the work; and I have finished the work that Thou didst give me to do."

Set this in line with your penitence. Know this to be the stamp of pardon, the seal of absolution; and be sure that no accomplishment of daily duty, no renewal of your task, can be done without the renewal of the pardon which lays open the gate of revelation to you, brings you into that great household where there is no waste, brings you to the Father to receive your orders, sets you forth bearing His burden, bearing His yoke, that yoke which fits so close in order that by its help you may draw the heavy burden of the cross of His Will unto the accomplishment which He has designed and to which He invites you.

THE SEVENTH WORD

FATHER, INTO THY HANDS I COMMEND MY .
SPIRIT

“And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He said, Father, into Thy Hands I commend My spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost.”—ST. LUKE xxiii. 46.

HE said of Himself, “No man taketh My life from Me but I lay it down of Myself.” And so now in the energy of His Holy Will, He relinquisheth His soul gladly into the hands of the Father. And think. Those Hands were round Him all His life. There was no void through which His soul must lapse into the Father’s Hands. There was no moment as it fled from His body before it reached its home, its support. But it had ever all through life been clasped by that strength. “Underneath are the everlasting arms”; and in truth He had simply to leave those things which seemed to stand between Him and the Father, so that the soul which had always been supported by the Father might be supported by Him alone

—might remain safe in His Hands Who had always held it up. Let us think thus of the Lord committing His soul into the hands of its Creator—the soul which had never slipped from God's holy guardianship. For He teaches by this our last need in the road of penitence. After pardon, patience; after patience, home; after home, communion; after communion, discipline; after discipline, singleness of aim to take up the work because it is God's will. And what remains? But one thing more—to lay it down. That is all. After labour, rest; after pain, refreshment. And we have to learn that God pursues us with His mercy even to our weariness. And when we have accepted His work from Him and borne as best we might, borne it by His grace; then for our last duty He invites us to rest. He makes even the relinquishment of toil a work of submission to Him, so that when we cease from labour we may not cease from obedience, but may rest at His commandment, even as at His commandment we struggle and persevere. See the wondrous mercy of God; that He allows no man to wait for His goodness; that He makes His refreshment a duty; that He makes rest an answer to His commandment. So be sure when you have taken up the work, He will bid you rest. And it may be that not long

after you have really accepted it, it will be the time for its relinquishment. And the relinquishment shall be sweet; and the sleep shall be welcome to you; the sleep which God gives to His beloved. And the soul which has borne discipline, which has cast out sin, shall lie at rest, shall fall asleep in Jesus Christ; shall willingly lay itself to sleep, not away from God, to be caught by God, but in God. It shall see the things of sense pass away while the sure hold of God which we have known in this life shall hold us still safe, and we shall rest for evermore in a peace which shall be full of blessing because full of obedience—a peace which is the very accomplishment of His whole aim in us.

In earlier steps Christ wins us blessing by accepting the curse. We have our peace through the chastisement which fell on Him, our healing by His stripes, our consolation in pain through His refusal to come down from the Cross. He saveth others because Himself He will not save. Our home was built by His bereavement, our communion by His desolation, even our heroism by His acceptance of relief. But as we draw near the end, the deeper truth alone abides our statement. It is no longer "Christ instead of us," but "Christ in us." We see that the deeper secret of His Passion is life—life for all; the life of

all in union with His own. And so, no longer in contrast but in harmony, His love of the Divine Will, the Father's work, is our acceptance of the purpose, our obedience to the call; and our rest is no rest except it be the very rest of Him Who, having done all things, sat down at the right hand of power.

Thus, from the first step to the last, does the Divine Love carry the poor sinner from the confusion of his crime and folly to the eternal peace of God's children, by the precious Blood-shedding of Jesus Christ our Lord.

THE END

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